



Module 1

MULTIGRADE TEACHING

Introduction to Multigrade Teaching



THE COMMONWEALTH *of* LEARNING

General Education Modules
for Upper Primary and Junior Secondary School Teachers
of Science, Technology and Mathematics by Distance
in the Southern African Development Community (SADC)

Developed by

The Southern African Development Community

Ministries of Education in:

- Botswana
- Malawi
- Mozambique
- Namibia
- South Africa
- Tanzania
- Zambia
- Zimbabwe

In partnership with The Commonwealth of Learning

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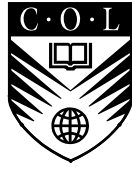
GENERAL EDUCATION MODULES

This module is one of a series prepared under the auspices of the Southern African Development Community (SADC) and The Commonwealth of Learning as part of the Science, Technology and Mathematics Programme (STAMP 2000+). These General Education modules enable teachers to enhance their professional skills through distance and open learning. Many individuals and groups have been involved in writing and producing these modules. We trust that they will benefit not only the teachers who use them, but also, ultimately, their students and the communities and nations in which they live.

The eighteen General Education modules are as follows:

- Module 1: *Multigrade Teaching: Introduction to Multigrade Teaching*
- Module 2: *Multigrade Teaching: Classroom Organisation and Management*
- Module 3: *The Reading Process*
- Module 4: *Developing Reading Skills*
- Module 5: *Special Educational Needs: An Introduction to Teaching Traumatised Children*
- Module 6: *Special Educational Needs: A Practical Guide to Teaching Traumatised Children*
- Module 7: *Education Management Development: Part A*
- Module 8: *Education Management Development: Part B*
- Module 9: *Child Development*
- Module 10: *Concepts of Learning*
- Module 11: *An Introduction to Concepts in Language and Communication*
- Module 12: *Language and Communication: Language in Use*
- Module 13: *Curriculum Theory, Design and Assessment*
- Module 14: *Curriculum Practice*
- Module 15: *A Theoretical Framework on Innovations in Education*
- Module 16: *Effects of Social Changes on Education*
- Module 17: *Comparative Education: Introduction to Key Concepts in Comparative Education*
- Module 18: *Comparative Education: Themes and Trends in Comparative Education in SADC Countries*

A MESSAGE FROM THE COMMONWEALTH OF LEARNING



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Module 1

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Introduction to Multigrade Teaching

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MULTIGRADE TEACHING

Introduction to Multigrade Teaching

This is one of a series of modules in the General Education courses developed by Ministries of Education in the SADC region in cooperation with The Commonwealth of Learning.

Although multigrade teaching has long been practised in our education systems, it has received little formal attention from teacher training centres in Southern Africa. By including two modules on multigrade teaching in this programme, we hope to make educators more aware of this efficient and often necessary teaching strategy. As well, the modules should contribute to the development of educational systems that can accommodate both the varied needs of learners and the lack of educational resources.

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LEARNING TIPS

You will find the following tips helpful as you study this module.

- **Set aside some time each day to work on this module.** If possible, study at the same time and in the same place so you are comfortable with your study surroundings. Learning at a distance requires discipline and motivation.
- **Go through the module unit by unit.**
- **Note any words you do not understand.** Look them up in a dictionary or other reference source or discuss them with your colleagues.
- **Underline or highlight important passages.** Make summary notes in the margins of long passages. Writing will help you to remember the material. You may also choose to make diagrams that illustrate how different ideas are related or list the steps in a procedure or technique.
- As you work through this module, **keep in mind your learners and their educational needs** as well as your instructional goals and your subject matter. How will you apply what you are learning?
- Read the assignment instructions carefully. Then, **do all the self-assessment activities** before proceeding to the Suggested Answers section.
- **As you undertake each activity, relate it to the practice of teaching** and analyse how it will help you to enhance the teaching-learning situation. Always ask yourself how you could use this material.
- **Apply some of the suggested techniques to your teaching.** All suggestions may not be appropriate for your situation, but how will you know unless you try them? Keep a record of what techniques work and an explanation of why some techniques appeared to fail. What does not work now may work later with different students.
- It may be difficult, but try to **meet occasionally with other teachers** to discuss the content and application of suggestions provided in this module.
- If you experience difficulty in understanding some aspect of the module, do not despair! You are meant to be challenged. **Do not give up!** Just remember that your goal is to be the best teacher that you can be. Think of what you would tell a student who was experiencing difficulty in your classroom. Then, apply the same advice to yourself.

ICONS

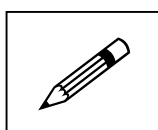
Throughout each module, you will find the following icons or graphic symbols that alert you to a change in activity within the module. Only the icons that are required are used in each module.



Text or Reading Material: provides information about the topics that are covered in a module. The subject matter for each SADC module is organised into units.



Introductory Activity: requires you to focus on the content that will be discussed in a unit.



Self-Assessment: enables you to check your understanding of what you have read and, in some cases, to apply the information presented in the unit to new situations.



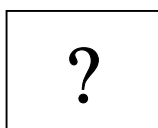
Practice Activity: encourages you to review and apply what you have learned before taking a unit test.



Reflection: asks you to relate what you have learned to your work as a teacher or education officer in your community.



Summary: highlights or provides an overview of the most important points covered in a unit.



Unit Test: concludes each unit.



Suggested Answers: allow you to evaluate your learning by providing sample answers to assessments, activities and the unit test.

MODULE RATIONALE

Multigrade teaching in the SADC region, just like in other parts of the developing and developed world, has been in existence since the introduction of the formal mass schooling system. The reasons for the existence of the phenomenon are many and will be explored later in the first units of the two modules on multigrade teaching.

Though multigrade classes have been with us for a long time, formal education systems have not paid sufficient attention to the challenges posed by the multigrade environment. For example,

1. The majority of teachers currently teaching multigrade classes have had no special training for teaching these classes.
2. There is little attention paid to this issue in government education policies.
3. There is little or no in-service support for multigrade teachers.
4. Teacher education institutions have tended to ignore multigrade teaching in their teacher development programmes.

Most teachers in multigrade classes have thus been left to fend for themselves. There is a growing awareness, however, that multigrade classrooms have a unique educational context. A deliberate and conscious attempt must be made to assist teachers in developing the skills and knowledge necessary to provide a quality education to children in multigrade classrooms. Curriculum and programme modifications are necessary to accommodate the needs of learners in multigrade situations.

The two modules on multigrade teaching represent an attempt by educators within the SADC region to achieve a number of objectives, namely:

1. To focus attention on the plight of teachers working in isolated, rural and difficult environments where they must deal with the challenge of multigrade classrooms on a daily basis.
2. To recognise and honour these teachers for their tremendous dedication, the sacrifices they have made and the wisdom they have gained as they laboured with their challenges while receiving minimal government or institutional support.
3. To acknowledge the need to implement development programmes and support systems that will address the knowledge, skills and management needs of teachers working in multigrade schools.
4. To encourage teacher training institutions to include multigrade teaching as an important topic in their curricula.
5. To offer some strategies that teachers can consider and apply to their situations.

We hope that the effort presented in these modules will go some way in meeting the above objectives, as well as in supporting similar endeavours that will raise the level of attention paid to multigrade schools.

UNIT 1: What Is Multigrade Teaching?



Introduction

You may be aware of many schools in your district or region where one teacher has to teach a number of grades at the same time and in the same class. Such situations are quite common and usually occur in rural areas or at farm schools and special schools. Many teachers who are in these situations find it difficult to teach these classes. They may not have been given the training or support they need to teach effectively in these situations.

In this unit, you will be introduced to the concept of multigrade teaching. You will also consider differences between multigrade and traditional single-grade (monograde) teaching.

If you are a multigrade teacher, you will be pleased to know that someone is addressing you through this module and discussing the challenges you face in your daily teaching.

Objectives

After completing this unit, you should be able to:

1. Describe a multigrade class in your region or district.
2. Compare multigrade and monograde teaching.

We are hoping that this unit will help you to acquire a number of professional skills. These include:

- conducting research,
- classifying information, and
- reflecting critically on the underlying causes of situations.

Content

This unit will cover the following topics:

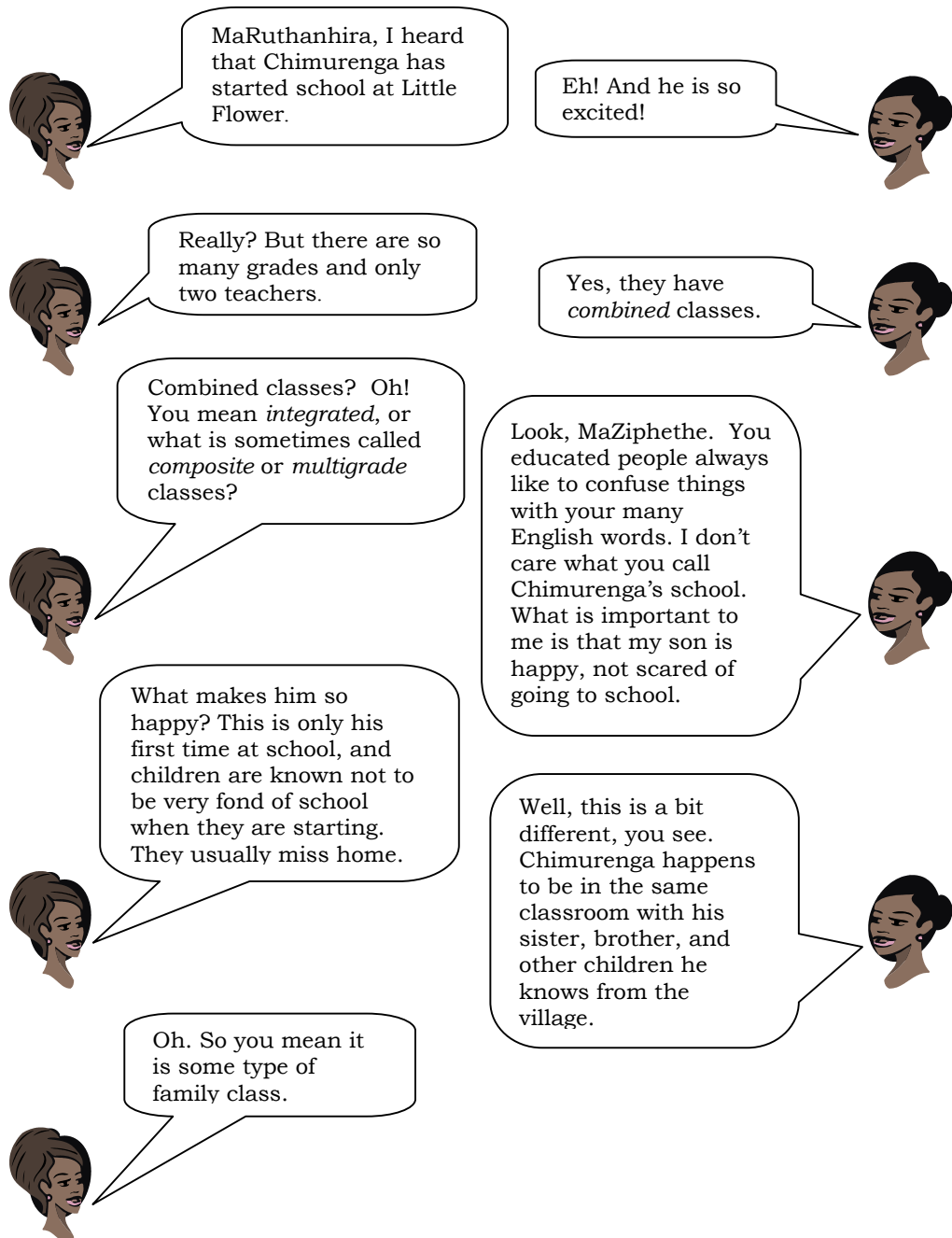
- a definition of multigrade teaching
- different terminology for multigrade teaching
- different viewpoints regarding multigrade teaching
- a comparison of multigrade and single-grade teaching.

Multigrade Teaching

Mrs Rutanhira and Mrs Ziphethe are leaving a community meeting. Mrs Rutanhira is telling her friend how happy and relieved she is because her youngest son, Chimurenga, has

adjusted so well to his new school. Chimurenga has just entered school for the first time and is in the same classroom with his big brother and sister, who started school two years ago.

In order to understand the multigrade context, read the dialogue between Mrs Rutanhira and Mrs Ziphethe.



In different parts of the world, different terms are used to describe multigrade teaching. Sometimes people refer to this as:

- split-class teaching
- double-grade teaching

- multi-level class teaching
- multi-program, composite class
- vertical streamed classes
- integrated class teaching.

As you proceed with this unit, think about the following questions:

- What do you think the term ‘multigrade’ means?
- What term is used in your area?

Just as there are different terms, there are also differences in the way people view these situations. To get a sense of what such schools or classes might be like, read the following example and story.

Description of a Multigrade School

The school can only be reached after a long walk, or maybe by getting a lift in the back of a farmer’s truck. When you get there, you will find a small building, divided into two or three classrooms. Sometimes well looked after, but often needing some repairs.

There is no electricity and no telephone, and water is drawn from a nearby river/well. There is no garden and no sports field. Instead, a rough piece of land is used as a playing ground.

The three classrooms cater for a little more than 100 learners who sit in rows according to their grades. There are two grades in each room, each with one teacher. The room for the Grade 1 and 2 learners is over-crowded. The groups of learners in the higher grades are smaller. The walls of the classrooms are quite bare, except for a few charts.

Usually the teacher gives instructions to one grade at a time. While she does this, other learners must wait, listen or play. The teacher has never been prepared at college for this situation.

After school, the children either play in the veld/open space, or they have singing practice for a concert to raise some funds for the school. The community sometimes collects funds and helps to maintain the buildings.

All three teachers are women, and two of them are single. They live near the school and prepare for their teaching at home, or after school. They feel over-worked, frustrated and isolated. They do not know how to deal with all the different demands placed on them by their classes. They would like to have more teaching and learning materials and resources.

They wish that there were more teachers available for their schools, so that they can be responsible for just one grade.

Source: Distance Education Project. (1998). *Research on Multigrade Teaching in the Eastern Cape*. Unpublished. Fort Hare University, Republic of South Africa.

Kully's Story

From Grade 1 to 7, I attended Khanya Primary School. Missionaries established the school in 1945. There were only two teachers. One taught Grades 1 and 2 in the morning, and 3 and 4 in the afternoon. The other taught Grades 5, 6 and 7 in the same class. I remember when the teacher would be busy with Grade 6. Grade 7 would be helping Grade 5 with reading English or working on Maths exercises. At the end of each day, the teachers would look so tired and frustrated. I enjoyed every bit of it. Those teachers were great. They were doing a good job. When we sat for Grade 7 examinations more than half of the class got very good marks. The school-community relationship was not particularly strong, though, and the government did nothing visible to support the school.



Self-Assessment 1

Now answer the following questions.

1. Do any of these examples sound familiar?
2. Have you had experiences similar to those in the example and story above? Did you attend multigrade classes? Did you like the experience?
3. What other thoughts do you have about the stories? Would you want your children to attend a multigrade class? If they did attend such a class, how would you help them to learn better in this environment? What advice would you give teachers to help your son or daughter learn more effectively?

Suggested answers to this activity are provided at the end of this unit.



What Is Meant by Multigrade Teaching?

'Multi' means plenty, many, or more than one. The word 'grade' means level. Multigrade, therefore, means many grades.

Multigrade teaching is a situation in which one teacher has to teach many grades, all at the same time. It happens in all schools where there are more grades than teachers. Some multigrade teachers may teach two grades, but some teach

three or four grades. In very small schools, teachers may teach six or seven grades at the same time under one roof.

In the traditional single-grade teaching, or monograde as it is sometimes called, the teacher teaches only one grade. The learners in each grade are usually of the same age but may differ in abilities.

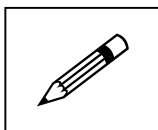
Multigrade versus Single-Grade

Classrooms are commonly associated with the single-grade class, and this is what the curriculum is usually designed to address. In this section, we want to look at a comparison of multigrade and single-grade classes.

While multigrade and single-grade classes have some significant differences, they also do share some common features. Both teaching situations include teachers and students who have come to school to learn. Teachers in both situations tend to have similar levels of qualifications and have undergone similar training programmes. The same curriculum is used in both situations. In many instances, you may find that the resources used in the single-grade class are the same as those used in the multigrade class.

However, it is not the similarities that we want to discuss in this unit. Rather, we would like to examine the defining features that differentiate multigrade from single-grade classes. We will do this through a two-part exercise.

- The first part of the exercise will involve you in research—a brief investigation that will allow you to think about the differences between multigrade and single-grade classes.
- The second part of the exercise will provide you with additional information against which you will compare your observations and conclusions drawn from the investigation in the first part of the exercise.



Self-Assessment 2

The following activity will require you to visit, observe and interview other teachers.

Part 1: Research

In this activity, you will need to visit teachers at a neighbouring school, to watch their classes and to talk to them about what they do, as well as their feelings about their job situation.

- If you are a multigrade teacher, arrange to visit a teacher who teaches a single-grade class. If

possible, visit someone who teaches one of the same grades you do.

- If you teach in a single-grade class, arrange to visit a multigrade teacher.
- You should spend about three hours at the school you visit. While you are there:
 - Observe your host's class during a teaching and learning session and record your observations in the observation form provided for this exercise.
 - Ask your host some questions and complete the questionnaire provided.

The observation portion of your research should not take you more than an hour-and-a-half to two hours, while the interview portion should take between 45 minutes and an hour.

Observation Form

This form will help you conduct your classroom observation.

Issues	Comments
Classroom organisation (Consider making a sketch or layout of the room on the reverse side of this form.)	
Number of children and age range	
Methods used by the teacher (e.g., lectures, demonstrations and discussions)	
Types of activities performed by the students (e.g., reading, writing, constructing an object and group work)	
Support provided by the teacher, the learners and the community	
Challenges	

Suggested answers to this activity are provided at the end of this unit.

Part 2: Comparison

Examine the following table, which lists some attributes or characteristics in which the multigrade situation may differ from that of the single-grade or monograde class. Read this table carefully. Then provide your additional thoughts regarding what may be missing from the table. Do include items from your own research.

Characteristics	Multigrade	Monograde
Methods	A variety of methods are used to meet the needs of individual learners who have different abilities and are in different grades.	A whole-class approach is used to meet the needs of individual learners with different abilities in the same grade.
Organisation	More time is needed for organising and planning instruction.	The teacher is responsible for only the mandated curriculum for that particular grade.
Relationships	Because of the small class size, the teacher appears to be part of the family unit.	The school population is larger, so it is more difficult to develop interpersonal relationships.
Tutoring	Peer tutoring is employed. Older learners serve as teachers and role models.	Usually group leaders assist others.
Teacher training	Many teachers have no multigrade training and lack technical support.	Many are trained with government support.
Number	Fewer children are frequently in multigrade classes, but there are different ages in different grades, and students have different abilities.	Normal class size is 40 to 60 students who are of the same age and same grade, but have different abilities.
Curriculum	The curriculum is not designed for multigrade classes.	The curriculum is geared towards monograde classes.
Remuneration	There is no special remuneration for teaching multigrade classes.	Special remuneration is possible through promotion.
Skills	Teachers require more skills in order to handle different grades.	Fewer skills are required to handle one grade.
Resources	The community is often poor and cannot provide additional educational materials.	The government often provides educational materials.

Now that you have completed your observation, participated in an interview and reviewed the comparison chart above, write a report on the situation you observed. Your report should compare the situation in the monograde class and the multigrade class. You may want to highlight the following:

- similarities between multigrade and monograde classes
- differences between multigrade and monograde classes
- classroom management and organisation techniques
- disciplinary issues
- overall reflections.

Suggested answers to this activity are provided at the end of this unit.



Summary

At the beginning of this unit, we noted that multigrade classes are very common in the Southern African Development Community (SADC). We also indicated that within the region, many terms are used to refer to multigrade classes. These terms were identified and discussed, without reference to specific countries.

The term multigrade was defined in order to give you a clear understanding of the term itself. We highlighted some similarities and differences between monograde and multigrade classrooms through case studies and a comparative study. In the next unit, we will examine the factors that contribute to the existence of multigrade classes in our region. We want to help you understand the conditions that give rise to this situation.



Reflection

Think about the information and skills you have acquired in this unit. Consider how you would apply what you have learned in your teaching situation.



Unit Test

Answer the following questions using the knowledge you have acquired throughout this unit.

1. Explain the concept of multigrade teaching.
2. Compare multigrade teaching and monograde teaching.
3. Describe your personal views on multigrade teaching.

Possible answers to this activity are provided at the end of this unit.



Suggested Answers

Self-Assessment 1

There are no specific answers to this activity. You are expected to give your own viewpoint. The purpose of this activity was to start you thinking about the meaning of the term 'multigrade classroom'.

Self-Assessment 2

Part 1: Research

There is no correct or incorrect answer to this activity, as teachers will be conducting this research in different situations. However, you may have made a few of the following observations:

- There are low numbers of learners per grade in multigrade classes compared to single-grade classes.
- There is a mixture of age groups in multigrade classes.
- A variety of teaching methods are used to accommodate the needs of the learners in both monograde and multigrade classes.
- A variety of student activities are employed to engage students actively in the learning process in both monograde and multigrade classes.
- Frequently, teacher, learner and community support are required to maintain multigrade schools.
- There are more challenges to overcome in multigrade classes than in single-grade classes.

Part 2: Comparison

There is no correct or incorrect answer to this comparison activity. Below are a few items that you may have included in your answer:

Similarities between multigrade and monograde classes:

- The teachers may have the same qualifications and training programmes.
- The schools may have the same curricula and resources.
- Learners may have different learning abilities in both types of classrooms.

Differences between multigrade and monograde classrooms:

- In multigrade classrooms:
 - More time is needed for planning and organisation.
 - There is a small learner population.

- Specialised multigrade training is not provided, and there is limited or no support for teachers.
- In monograde classrooms:
 - Less time is needed for planning and organisation.
 - There is a large learner population.
 - Government support is provided.

Classroom management and organisation techniques:

Your answers will depend on your observations. However, did you note whether all students were more or less actively engaged in the class or classes you observed? It is highly likely that in multigrade classes, some of the students were distracted when the teacher gave instructions or lectures to other members of the class. A major challenge for multigrade teachers is to design activities that are appropriate for the different grades, ages and ability levels of their students.

Disciplinary issues:

Again, your answer depends on your observations. Note that due to the variety of learners in multigrade classes, it can be difficult to select a disciplinary measure that is appropriate for each child and in each situation.

Overall reflections:

These also depend on your observations. Do note items, procedures or activities that you could use or should avoid when you are teaching a multigrade class.

Unit Test

Your answers may include the following:

1. 'Multi' means 'many' and grade means 'level'. Multigrade teaching means one teacher teaches many grades at the same time.
2. Compare your answer to the answer suggested for Self-Assessment 2.
3. No specific answer can be suggested for this question. The answer depends on your own point of view.

UNIT 2: Factors Contributing to the Establishment of Multigrade Teaching



Introduction



Pat, I heard that a new school will be opening in Venda Village.

What? Why would they do that? There are only about 30 children there. Don't they know, Kully?



Yes, but the nearest school is 40 km away, and the village is surrounded by rivers.

So what? Let the government build bridges and roads.



Don't be difficult, Pat. Why should the children have to travel so far to go to school? And where will the money come from to construct the bridges and roads?

Kully, who will teach them? Do you know how much it will cost to pay 7 teachers for 30 children?



There is already a trained teacher in the village. She will be the teacher. Do not forget that the nearest village that has a school is fighting with the community of Venda Village.

In this day and age, they still bring one teacher to teach 7 grades. What is this country coming to? Don't they realise the importance of giving our children a good education?



Source: Adapted from Commonwealth Secretariat, the Caribbean Community Secretariat and the Commonwealth of Learning. (1998: 17). *Multigrade Teaching Program. Module 1: Multigrade Teaching, An Introduction*. London: Commonwealth Secretariat.

Objectives

After completing this unit, you should be able to:

1. Describe and discuss the factors contributing to the establishment of multigrade teaching.
2. Explain and analyse the benefits of multigrade teaching.
3. Discuss the benefits of multigrade teaching in your own situation.

Content

This unit will cover the following topics:

- factors contributing to the establishment of multigrade teaching
- benefits of multigrade teaching.

The dialogue in the introduction highlights two points of view. Individuals like Pat believe that multigrade schools are a thing of the past. People like Kully are quick to point out that multigrade classrooms must exist in order to overcome certain situations.

- Schools are not always being built close to communities. For example, the school nearest Venda Village is 40 km away.
- Ministries of Education have not been able to supply one teacher to teach small numbers of children in each grade. In Venda Village, 7 teachers would not be available to teach 30 learners.

These are only two of the numerous reasons why multigrade schools exist in many countries of the SADC region today.

Country	Percentage of Primary Schools That Are Multigrade
Botswana	in some cases
Lesotho	40%
Namibia	10%
South Africa	50%
Zambia	26%
Zimbabwe	20%

The above situation is not unique to the SADC region. Multigrade classrooms exist in countries such as the Caribbean nations, Vietnam, Portugal, Finland and, to a small degree, in rural areas of Canada.

Clearly, we can see that many communities are like Venda Village. If children in small communities are to be educated, they may be required to attend multigrade schools. The cases below further illustrate the realities of multigrade schools.

Case Study 1

This school is situated on a farm, where a mobile clinic comes monthly. It is about 120 km from the main road where the nearest education office and shops are located.

It has a total of 43 learners in Grades 1 to 6 and two teachers. Ms Ndongzo is the principal and teaches Grades 4, 5 and 6. She is a qualified teacher with 10 years of teaching experience. Ms Sobayi is teaching Grades 1, 2 and 3 and has between 10 and 12 years of teaching experience. She is new at the school. She transferred to the school this year at the end of the first term.

The school is fenced in and has no water, electricity, telephone or toilets. There is a school garden with some produce but no playing or sports fields. There is one room of 88 m² with cracked walls, a leaking roof and no window panels. The two teachers share this room for their teaching. Sometimes, when the weather is favourable, one teacher teaches outside under the trees.

Source: Distance Education Project. (1998). *Research on Multigrade Teaching in the Eastern Cape*. Unpublished. Fort Hare University, Republic of South Africa.

Case Study 2

There are two teachers teaching in Kagisong Primary School. The school is about 20 km away from the nearest village. One teacher teaches Grades 1, 2, 3 and 4. The other teacher teaches Grades 5, 6 and 7 as a combined class. The teachers expressed concern over the tardiness of the learners, the lack of resources and the excessive workload. The school has requested a third teacher from the Ministry of Education, but the request has gone unheeded. The community is very poor and cannot manage to hire the required third teacher on its own. Also, there are no literate people in the village to help as teaching aides.

Source: Distance Education Project. (1998). *Research on Multigrade Teaching in the Eastern Cape*. Unpublished. Fort Hare University, Republic of South Africa.

Case Study 3

The school serves four small villages and the nearest school is 19 km away. The school has three teachers, two of whom are trained

teachers and have specialised in multigrade teaching. The teachers state that their multigrade training comprised two weeks of practice 12 years ago, which, though valuable, was inadequate. They feel a need for more in-service training in multigrade teaching and feel that the concept of multigrade teaching should be introduced to all teachers as part of the normal pre-service training. The school-community relationship is very strong. The Parent-Teacher Association maintains the classroom block and is raising money for another classroom.

Source: Adapted from Overseas Development Administration. (1995, January). Serial No. 12: *Educational Research*.

Is your situation similar to any of the above cases?

Below, we will discuss some of the factors that have led to the establishment of multigrade schools.

Geographical Factors

Some areas are geographically isolated by rivers, sand dunes or thick forest. As a result, few people live in these areas. Examples are the mountainous villages of Lesotho. The children in these areas deserve education just like any other children. Therefore, under such conditions, multigrade teaching becomes the only available choice for these communities.

Let us return to the discussion between Pat and Kully about Venda Village, where there are only 30 school children. There are many communities like Venda Village in our region. Some of these communities move from place to place in search of a means of survival. For example, they move to places where they can find food for themselves and their animals.

Sometimes these small communities are far away from large schools. Many of the students in such communities are too young to travel to larger schools. In addition, their populations are too small to support monograde schools. Under these circumstances, multigrade teaching is an alternative. It makes it possible to provide basic education to sparsely populated communities.

Political Factors

The majority of small multigrade schools are in remote and isolated areas and sometimes close to the country boundaries.

Though there might be a school close by across the border, the learners are not allowed to cross the border. Also, villages under different chiefs or associated with different tribes, no matter how small, may not have a close relationship with each other. They may not have the same political affiliation. As part of the local development effort, these leaders will push to have schools in their areas regardless of the size of the population.

Cultural Factors

Think about what happens if the children of one community must attend a school in another community. Parents may not want their children to attend a school in an area that has a different culture. They may fear that their children will be influenced, and they will lose some of their community's values and traditions. This is frequently the case in communities that are near towns and cities. Parents may also fear that their children may be attracted to the town and leave home. Therefore, they would prefer to have a small school in their own village and maintain their traditions and values.

Socio-Economic Factors

It is difficult to hire a teacher for each grade level when the enrolment is lower than the government-stipulated teacher/pupil ratio. As Pat pointed out in the introduction to Unit 2, it is not cost-effective to hire 7 teachers to teach 30 children. Few countries, if any, can afford to pay a teacher to teach three or four students. Ministries of Education in most countries have set a ratio of the number of learners to a teacher. For some countries, it might be 30 or 50 learners per teacher. Find out what the ratio of learners per teacher is in your country.

Another factor to consider is the lack of both human and material resources. Some countries have limited resources, especially in remote rural schools. They do not have the resources to hire the number of teachers needed for the system. Some rural schools do not have the basic amenities such as accommodation for teachers, an adequate number of classrooms and teaching-learning materials. As a result, many teachers do not want to work in the remote rural schools. This means that these schools frequently experience a shortage of teachers.

Benefits of Multigrade Teaching

Mrs Khani is the new teacher hired to teach at the Venda Village School described at the beginning of this unit. She was invited to a workshop. At the workshop, the facilitator explained some of the benefits of multigrade teaching. Mrs Khani was concerned about how she could use these advantages to benefit her learners.

Perhaps Mrs Khani is no different from other teachers, parents and educational administrators who assume that small multigrade schools are less effective than large single-grade schools. People claim that:

- Two or three teachers teaching seven grades cannot deliver the whole curriculum effectively.
- Educators at such schools experience professional isolation.
- Multigrade teaching cannot help individual learners excel.

Can you add assumptions to the list? You might be as concerned as Mrs Khani, but let us assure you that the benefits of multigrade teaching to your learners will make your hard work worthwhile.

Research has shown that multigrade teaching, if properly done:

- can be as academically effective as single-grade teaching, and
- can promote the social skills of the learners significantly better than single-grade classes can.

In this unit, you will study how multigrade teaching can benefit your learners.

In multigrade classes, there can be:

- a greater understanding between teachers and learners,
- a richer environment for the learners,
- greater community involvement,
- better classroom management,
- an increase in students' learning, and
- development of self-esteem.

The advantages of multigrade classes outlined above are similar to the advantages of single-grade classes with many students.

Social Benefits of Multigrade Schools

These schools resemble a family setting. As a result of this:

- Children in these schools are more stable emotionally.
- They can learn certain things better from their peers just as they would from siblings.
- They may learn better overall.

For instance, take the following conversation between two ladies, Mary and Susan.

Mary: You know, children can really be funny creatures. Do you know the trouble I took to get my daughter Zintle a good education, finding her a good school in town where she can be taught by white teachers, play with white children, speak English and learn all the habits of 'civilised' people. You know, the real thing! Real education, not play! And what does this child do? She cries every night, demanding to join her cousin at Zamba Valley School, the village school where they mix Grades 1, 2, 3 and 4. She says she wants to be with Thato and Nomsa in the same class even though Nomsa is in Grade 3. I finally gave in and took her to the school. She now seems a happy and contented child and the strange thing is that her performance seems to have improved and her reading skills are even better. This is very strange indeed. How do you explain this situation? I can't understand it.

Susan: Well, I would not be too surprised. Firstly, I will tell you that small schools provide effective education. One other thing you should know is that speaking English does not necessarily mean that one is civilised or clever. However, let me come to Zintle's case. I happen to know the village school you are talking about. I have actually worked with the teachers there for a number of years. I think they do a brilliant job and they really care about the children. They teach well. They stress the importance of sharing and working as members of one family. You will be amazed at how this school changes children's behaviour. Many children who bring their differences at the beginning of the first term soon become friends with other children from different homes and backgrounds.

A lot of good education goes on at that small school, and I think that is why your daughter Zintle is enjoying learning at the school. The smaller the group and fewer children to teach, the better. At school, I feel very comfortable meeting fewer faces, which are easy to recognise than at the big school where one meets so many faces. Many, I don't recognise.

Source: Adapted from Eastern Cape Education Department, Republic of South Africa. (1999). Unpublished. *Schools as Homes for Learning: A Multi-Learning Resource Book for Educators.*

If you were Susan, what other advantages of multigrade schools would you describe to Zintle's mother? Write out your suggestions.

As evidenced in the story above, the multigrade classroom is an environment where routines are frequently stated and followed. Learners learn to be self-directed, often working individually or

in small groups. They also learn how to help others who are experiencing difficulties with their work.

Below, we will discuss additional positive attributes of multigrade schools.

Richer Learning Environment

- The teacher at times has so many duties to attend to that he or she cannot be everywhere or be with every learner at the same time. The teacher shares instructional responsibilities with learners. The learners in multigrade classes appear to do better than learners in a single-grade classroom. They know what they are expected to do. They know what assignments to work on, how to get help and where to turn to for help. They learn how to help one another even at an early age. They become independent learners.
- For example, when Grade 1 learners go to school for the first time in a multigrade class, they get help and guidance from both the teacher and the older learners. Sometimes these older learners are their brothers and sisters. As time goes by, they learn to be self-reliant and are able to meet many of their own needs by learning or seeing how other learners are behaving. Older learners are willing to help the new learners, who in turn learn to cooperate.
- Learners of different age groups know each other better and can build supportive relationships.
- Children in lower grades who learn quickly can attach themselves to groups of learners in higher grades.
- Older, faster or more experienced learners can teach younger, slower or less experienced learners. Consequently, they learn better themselves. One of the best ways to learn about a subject is to teach it.
- Learners of different age groups can form cooperatives and work together.
- Discussions at different levels of maturity can inspire new learners.

Greater Understanding between Educators and Learners

- In a multigrade class, teachers know their learners better because they are with them for more than one year. As a multigrade teacher, you should strive to be an effective teacher because the learners can be disadvantaged if you have a negative attitude over an extended period of time.

- Learners need not adjust to new rules or procedures each year. Time is not wasted while teacher and learners get acquainted.

Greater Community Involvement

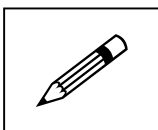
Parents also have skills and knowledge that they can share with learners. The educator can ask parents to indicate what skills or knowledge they can share with the class. Parents may share skills like cooking, sewing, cultural dance and art.

For example, you could be teaching a Grade 3 science lesson while students in other grades listen to a parent tell a story related to the same lesson. Or a parent could conduct an art class with the Grades 1 and 2 students while the Grade 3 students are doing a science lesson. Parents are more committed when they participate in their children's learning, and the learners do better and enjoy their classwork more. Inviting parents to participate in classroom activities can be a positive way of addressing such issues as discipline and the general well-being of learners.

Development of Healthy Competition

You are aware that in multigrade situations, students in many different grades are in the same classroom. What happens when a Grade 4 learner finds out that she can solve problems set for Grade 6? And what happens when a Grade 6 learner realises that he cannot do work that a Grade 4 learner should be able to do? It is likely that the Grade 6 learner will work harder so that the Grade 4 learner does not catch up with him.

In a multigrade classroom, all the learners see what is taking place at every grade level, and this may lead to self-motivation to finish their grade and move on to the next.



Self-Assessment 1

Mrs Jones lives in a remote setting and she teaches in a small multigrade school. She teaches an average of 10 learners ranging from Grade 1 to Grade 7, and she works about eight hours a day completing different types of tasks. She is the headteacher and the secretary. She is the kitchen staff who prepares lunch for some of the learners whose parents are not able to pick them up during lunch break. She is also the driver for the school bus. But she still enjoys teaching and working in a one-teacher school. To Mrs Jones, all these duties are rewarding.

Now answer the following questions:

1. How is Mrs Jones benefiting from her experience as a teacher at the multigrade school?

2. Imagine that you were Mrs Jones. How would you use the advantages of multigrade teaching to make your workload lighter?
3. State the factors contributing to the existence of some of the multigrade schools in your area.

Suggested answers to this activity will be found at the end of the unit.



Self-Assessment 2

1. In two columns, list what you think are major benefits of multigrade teaching both to the teacher and to the learner.

<i>Teacher</i>	<i>Learner</i>

2. Case Studies

Earlier in Unit 2, you were provided with three case studies reflecting three different multigrade teaching situations in three different countries. Reread the case studies. Then answer the questions below. While answering the questions, refer to the text as needed.

- a. What are the similarities among these case studies in the manner in which multigrade teaching is practised?
- b. What are the differences in how multigrade teaching is practised in these countries?
- c. Discuss why you think multigrade teaching would most likely be the only type of schooling available in these communities.

Suggested answers to these questions are provided at the end of the unit.



Practice Activity

1. Now that you have learned about some of the factors contributing to the existence of multigrade teaching, write a case study about your own school, highlighting factors that led to the establishment of the school. If you are not currently teaching at a multigrade school, write about a multigrade school that is in your community.
2. Select one of the benefits of multigrade teaching and apply it to your school. For example, since community involvement is a benefit of multigrade classrooms, ask a parent to teach an art class to one group of students while you teach math to another group. Report your findings. Outline both the positive results and any

barriers you faced in implementing this attribute of multigrade teaching.

Possible answers to this activity will be found at the end of the unit.



Summary

In this unit, we noted that multigrade teaching situations exist in many countries, including those in our region. We outlined the factors that influence the establishment of multigrade schools. These factors include:

- Geographical factors: inaccessible areas resulting in small and moving populations, reluctance of some teachers to teach in remote areas
- Political factors: inaccessibility of schools that lie near the borders with other countries
- Cultural factors: different values, practices and traditions among cultural groups
- Socio-economic factors: the cost of paying teachers, the lack of resources in remote areas and the number of teachers available in the country

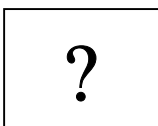
Secondly, we reviewed the benefits that can accrue when multigrade teaching is implemented. Benefits may include:

- the promotion of learners' social skills,
- no significant differences in academic performance between multigrade and single-grade learners,
- greater understanding between teachers and learners,
- greater community involvement, and
- a healthy competition among learners.



Reflection

Reflect on your performance as a teacher of a multigrade class. How can you be more effective in your class?



Unit Test

1. Identify and discuss the factors that contribute to the establishment of multigrade schools.
2. Outline and analyse the benefits of multigrade teaching.



Suggested Answers

Self-Assessment 1

1. By working as a multigrade teacher, Mrs Jones:
 - learns a variety of skills,
 - enjoys better learner-teacher relationships,
 - develops organisational and managerial skills,
 - develops strong community relationships, and
 - reinforces her self-esteem.
2. Mrs Jones can make her workload lighter by:
 - increasing the involvement of the community,
 - giving learners additional responsibility, and
 - developing a richer learning environment for the children.
3. Multigrade classes or schools may have been established due to a variety of factors, including:
 - geographical factors,
 - political factors,
 - cultural factors, and
 - socio-economic factors.

Self-Assessment 2

1. Benefits of multigrade teaching

<i>Teacher</i>	<i>Learner</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• greater understanding of learners• better classroom management• better relationship with the community• development of self-esteem	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• better social skills• richer learning environment• better learner-teacher understanding• increased learning• development of self-esteem

2. a. Similarities among multigrade schools in case studies:
 - All schools are located in rural areas.
 - All schools have multigrade classes.
 - Schools lack resources.

- Two of the case studies indicate that the class sizes are small.
 - Teachers have received little or no in-service or staff development.
- b. Differences between multigrade schools in case studies:
- Some teachers are trained while others are not.
 - In two of the case studies, the schools are about 20 km away from other schools or major centres, while one school is 120 km from a major road.
- c. There are a variety of possible answers to this question. However, your answer should include at least the following points:
- The school population is small, and the children are in a variety of grades.
 - The community cannot afford to hire one teacher per grade.
 - It is likely that the government has set student/teacher ratios that the local communities cannot meet.

Practice Activity

1. Some factors that contribute to the establishment of multigrade schools:
 - geographical factors – isolated regions of the country
 - political factors – inaccessible cross-border schools
 - cultural factors – different values and traditions held by the local communities
 - socio-economic factors – lack of resources to support monograde classes.
2. Your response to this question will depend on your circumstances. However, you may have included items such as the following:
 - greater understanding between teachers and learners
 - a richer environment for the learners
 - greater community involvement
 - better classroom management
 - increased student learning
 - development of self-esteem.

Unit Test

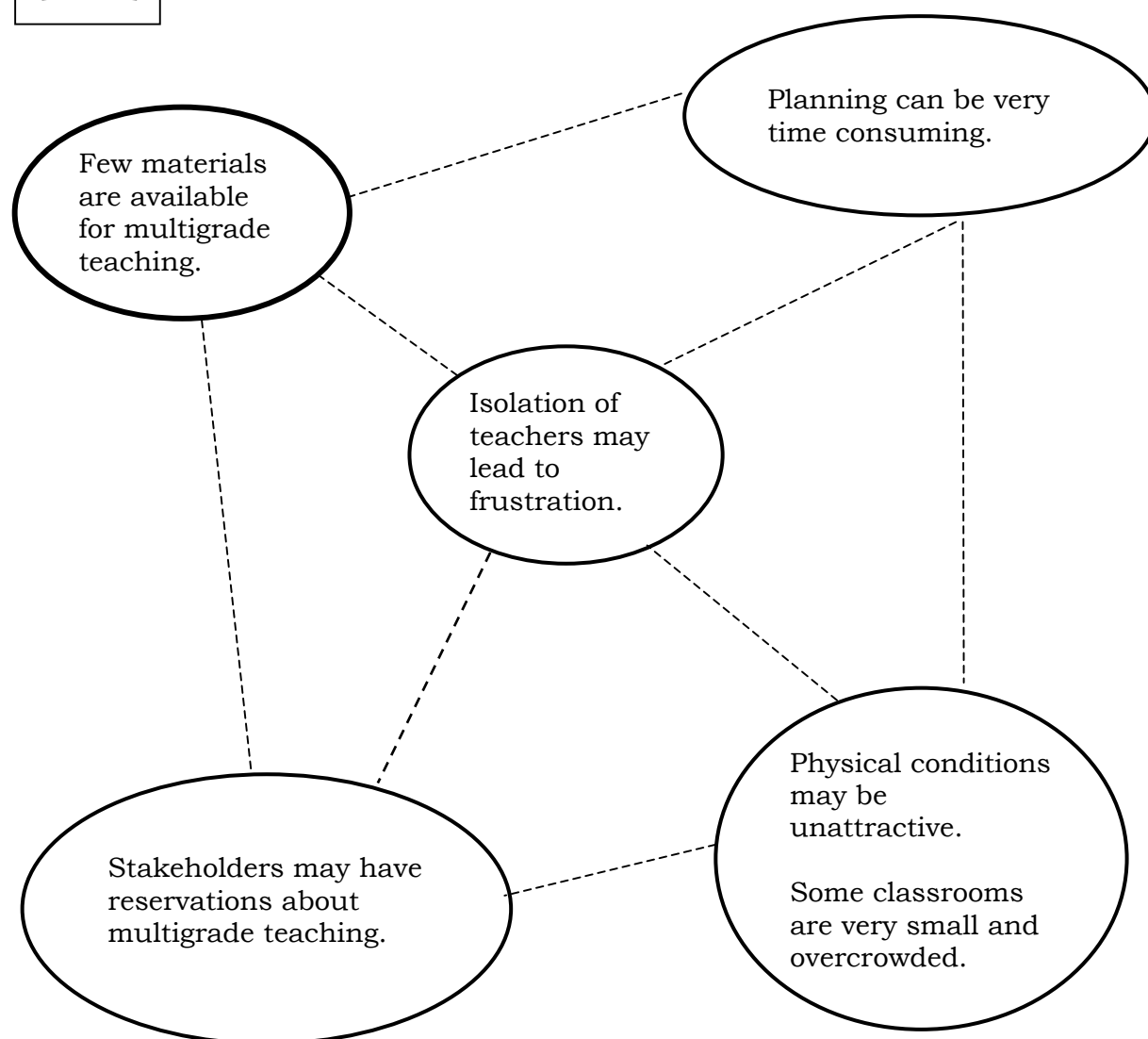
1. Factors that contribute to establishment of multigrade schools:
 - geographical factors
 - political factors
 - cultural factors
 - socio-economic factors.
2. Benefits of multigrade teaching:
 - social benefits
 - a richer learning environment for the learners
 - greater understanding between teachers and learners
 - the development of a healthy competition among students.

Please add your own benefits to this list.

UNIT 3: Challenges of Multigrade Teaching and Ways to Overcome Them



Introduction



Source: Adapted from Commonwealth Secretariat, Caribbean Community Secretariat and Commonwealth of Learning. (1998: 60). *Multigrade Teaching Program. Module 1: Multigrade Teaching, An Introduction*. London: Commonwealth Secretariat.

In the previous unit, we discovered that multigrade teaching can be a positive experience. You may even have asked yourself, “If there are so many advantages to using multigrade teaching, then why are teachers not applying these strategies in their classrooms?” However, you know that there are stumbling blocks that hinder the successful implementation of multigrade teaching.

In this unit, we will refer to these stumbling blocks as challenges. We will also suggest ways of overcoming these challenges by looking at the principles of successful multigrade teaching and learning.

Objectives

After completing this unit, you should be able to:

1. Identify some of the challenges associated with implementing multigrade teaching.
2. Discuss how these challenges can be overcome.
3. Describe the guiding principles of successful multigrade teaching.

Content

This unit will cover the following topics:

- challenges related to multigrade teaching
- strategies for successful multigrade teaching
- guidelines for successful multigrade teaching.

Challenges of Multigrade Teaching

Because most multigrade schools are small and remote from population centres, they experience a variety of challenges. These challenges are described below.

The Curriculum

One challenge faced by those who are implementing multigrade teaching is that the materials such as textbooks are designed to be used in single-grade schools. Teachers are not always trained sufficiently to adapt the materials and curricula to a multigrade setting. More information about the curriculum is provided in Unit 3 of Module 2, *Multigrade Teaching: Classroom Organisation and Management*.

Planning for Delivery

Multigrade teaching requires that a lot of planning be conducted outside of the regular class time. Teachers, like everyone else, have a lot of extracurricular activities and responsibilities that are not school-related. They have their families to care for, and many of them are very active members of the community. Remember Mrs Jones, in Unit 2? She was

the headteacher, the secretary, the kitchen staff and the bus driver!

Attitude

Some parents and a few educational personnel have a negative attitude towards multigrade teaching. Do you remember Mary, Zintle's mother, in Unit 2? She wanted her child to attend a monograde school, yet her daughter, Zintle, was happiest in a multigrade school. In order to refresh your memory, go back to Unit 2 and reread the dialogue between Mary and Susan. What attitudes are displayed in the dialogue?

Some people view multigrade teaching as a 'waste of time'. They believe that the teachers must be in front of the class pouring knowledge into the heads of their learners. They believe that for their children to gain knowledge, skills and attitudes, they should be in single-grade schools and be lectured to. This misconception is a challenge for multigrade teachers, who must convince these people that what they perceive is not necessarily true. Children learn by playing and interacting with others. These activities frequently occur at multigrade schools.

The Physical Space

The appearance and the size of some classrooms present a challenge to multigrade teaching. Some teachers object to multigrade teaching because they say that classrooms are often too small, too crowded and poorly furnished. These conditions may also occur in monograde schools.

Isolation Due to the Geographical Location

Most multigrade schools are located in isolated areas. Teachers need to spend more time, effort and money to collect educational materials from education offices. Supplies may not be readily available. In most cases, transportation may be extremely limited.

These schools are seldom visited by education advisers or even colleagues from other schools. As a result, teachers in these schools suffer isolation and lack of support.

Disadvantaged Local Environment

Some of the parents in areas where these schools are located have not received much schooling themselves. They do not feel inclined to help their children with schoolwork or to support school activities. They do not see the benefit of schooling and may prefer their children to work or help out around the home. The community is often poor and cannot provide for educational materials or pay the teachers. The school buildings and grounds are often not in good condition.

Outside of school time, the community may use school buildings for meetings and church services. This is not a bad idea. The school can be used by the community in many ways.

However, this can become a problem if these other activities disrupt learning activities. For example, if the teacher leaves the classroom arranged in a certain way or has some materials displayed and stored in the classroom, the community users may move the classroom furnishings, and the materials may be lost or destroyed.

Learners at Different Learning Levels

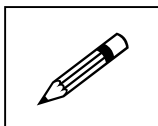
If you do not carefully prepare for your lesson, the following may occur:

- Learners who are not given work to do may waste time.
- Learners can become noisy and unruly and disturb others who are trying to work.
- Learners may be quiet, but they can be bored.
- Learners may not get enough personal attention.
- Learners may not complete the required curriculum.

Teacher Frustration

Many teachers have not been prepared for the demands of multigrade teaching. Without appropriate support or additional training, they can become overwhelmed, frustrated and unmotivated.

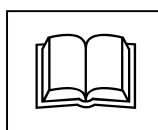
As a multigrade teacher, you must become aware of these challenges in order to overcome them.



Self-Assessment 1

Although there are benefits of implementing multigrade teaching, there are also challenges. List and discuss at least six of these challenges.

Suggested answers to this activity are provided at the end of this unit.



Meeting the Challenges

Preparation for multigrade teaching and learning requires a lot of work and effort. As a result, many teachers become overworked, discouraged and frustrated. However, there are possible solutions to these challenges. The following section suggests a few ideas that you may want to try.

If you are not a multigrade teacher now, you may try these solutions in a single-grade class. They are especially effective if you have large classes.

More solutions to the challenges will be explained when we suggest guidelines for successful multigrade teaching in the next sections. Now you need to read and reflect on the information provided below.

In order to meet the challenges of multigrade teaching, you need to explore cooperative initiatives with people such as the following:

- colleagues in your school
- parents and other members of your community
- colleagues in nearby schools
- colleagues in other multigrade schools
- colleagues in teacher organisations and associations
- officials in the ministries of education.

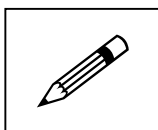
You also need to look at in-service courses and workshops that can help you develop knowledge and skills in the following areas:

- methodologies for multigrade classes
- multigrade planning
- multigrade assessment skills
- materials preparation.

Most important of all, you need to have a positive attitude towards multigrade teaching.

Remember that careful planning will improve the classroom learning environment. Learners' strengths are developed. They work at their own pace. Teachers can better manage and organise the curriculum, and members of the community can participate actively in their children's learning.

Many institutions such as universities and colleges of education are now becoming aware of the need to provide training for multigrade teachers. This course is just one of the steps that you can take in your effort to become a successful multigrade teacher.



Self-Assessment 2

You have identified some benefits of multigrade teaching, and you may have shared this information with your colleagues. Some teachers, however, may not accept these ideas. Can you suggest the possible causes of teacher resistance to multigrade teaching?

Possible answers to this activity are provided at the end of this unit.



Guidelines for Successful Multigrade Teaching and Learning

What are the guidelines for successful multigrade teaching and learning?

- **Maximise the use of time devoted to teaching and learning.**

As in all educational situations, time is a precious commodity and should not be misused. Reflect on how much time you waste in the classroom looking for a piece of chalk, choosing the right child to clean the chalkboard, looking for reference books, having learners stand when you enter the classroom and many other irrelevant classroom procedures.

One of the challenges is dealing with officials, parents and others who may have a negative attitude towards multigrade teaching. Convince them that learning is in fact taking place by providing the learners with the opportunity to display their knowledge, skills and attitudes.

Display students' work in the classroom, and hold open days and contests in various subject areas. When officials and community members see that learning is taking place, they will come to realise that children learn through active participation. When you were a student, do you remember how you felt when your work was displayed on the classroom wall?

- **Foster cooperation at all levels: learners, teachers, parents and community members.**

Maximise the resources that the social structure of the multigrade class presents.

Read the following story.

Mrs Khani is the new teacher hired to teach at Venda Village School, the situation mentioned in Unit 2. She teaches Grades 1, 2 and 3 as a whole group. Today, she is trying to teach a reading lesson to three groups. Six-year-old Carol, who is slow at reading, is sitting in a corner sucking her thumb. Lizo and Thabo are shouting out the words as soon as the teacher points at them. Mpho is trying her best to keep up with Lizo and Thabo. She eventually gives up and starts mumbling as the teacher points to the words. Pedro, Lorna and Annah are busy trying to get their science poster completed.

Source: Adapted from Commonwealth Secretariat, Caribbean Community Secretariat and Commonwealth of Learning. (1998: 53-54). *Multigrade Teaching Program. Module 1: Multigrade Teaching, An Introduction*. London: Commonwealth Secretariat.

What a disorganised reading lesson! It seems that only two children are interested in this lesson. Surely, no one of us would like to be in Mrs Khani's shoes. How can we help Mrs Khani meet the varying needs of her learners? The social structure present in her multigrade class can allow Mrs Khani to provide meaningful work for each learner.

How will we help her? Lizo and Thabo could be working at a word puzzle. Mrs Khani could be helping Carol, Annah and Mpho to write a short story based on the reader. She could also invite a parent, Mr Brown, to read the story to Carol. Pedro and Lorna could still be working on their science poster. Everyone is now busy, and this classroom looks more organised. Learners are enjoying themselves, and they are engaged in productive work. Mrs Khani could also ask a parent to come and share his or her skills with the learners.

You might want to try Mrs Khani's approach in an effort to make teaching a little less burdensome. Remember that learners are also a good resource, especially those in higher grades. Learners can help with the preparation of visual aids, the rearrangement of classrooms after class time and the establishment of activity corners. You are not the only one with creative ideas. Remember the good feeling you get as a teacher when everyone seems to be engaged in meaningful work.

- **Set up a network of educators in similar small multigrade schools, to support each other, to share experiences and to develop educational materials.**

Is it possible for three or four teachers in your area to meet once a month for two days to develop materials for the whole month? How much time could be saved compared to the time you would need when you work alone to develop those materials?

- **Cultivate a positive attitude and outlook towards cooperative learning.**

Teachers need to believe that:

- Learners can learn independently, on their own or in groups.
- Learners can be creative and responsible.
- Learners can help each other.
- Parents have something to offer to the school, and they can be very talented.

- **Identify and draw on the potential advantages of the school and community environment.**

Anyone who possesses relevant knowledge and skills is welcome in the classroom. Read the following teacher's story.

I teach in a small village school. We are two teachers faced with many grades as usual. Mr Piliso and I decided to use whatever expertise we can find in the community. Then we approached an old lady, Makwalo, the best storyteller in the area. Over the past year, she would come twice a week to tell stories at the school and became perhaps the most valuable teacher we had in the school. Mr Piliso and myself would sit with her and talk through what we wanted the learners to learn, say a historic event in social science. Makwalo would go off and craft a story around that and come back to share it with us before telling it to the children. At other times, she would not let us hear the story until she told it to the learners. Then she would bring her musical instruments to play as she told and sang through a story.

Source: Adapted from Eastern Cape Education Department, Republic of South Africa. (1999). *Schools as Homes for Learning: A Multi-Learning Resource Book for Educators*. Unpublished.

In addition, parents can be resource persons in subjects like science, home economics, agriculture, craftwork or knitting. Parents can volunteer to show traditional activities unknown to the teachers. Parents can help with drawing illustrations for displays and can demonstrate artistic work such as mat making, carpentry and construction.

Develop universal concepts and skills through the study of the culture, life and work of the local community and area. Draw upon the resources and skills within the community and invite local people to share their expertise with your learners.

- **Identify your own weaknesses and address them.**

Read, talk to people or find courses that can help you improve your abilities and situation. Most teachers must train the learners in the skills and techniques of independent learning. You must, therefore, plan your work, look for and create the necessary human and material resources, organise the classroom and run independent learning activities. Other modules will suggest how you can tackle these tasks.



Practice Activity

1. From your experience and from the insights you have gained from this unit, suggest additional ways to overcome challenges of multigrade teaching.
2. Try one of the guidelines suggested to create a more successful multigrade class. Explain clearly how you would do this in your own situation. Report on the successes and failures of your activities. Remember that failure is important because it frequently leads to success.

Possible answers to these questions are provided at the end of this unit.



Summary

In this unit, we focused on the challenges of multigrade teaching and ways to overcome these challenges.

We noted that there are very few materials that address multigrade teaching. Many teachers experience difficulties with using multigrade strategies.

Planning for classroom delivery can be very time consuming and, like other persons, teachers have very busy lives outside of the classroom.

Some community members have reservations about multigrade teaching because they feel that 'real' learning does not always occur in multigrade classrooms.

Some classrooms may be overcrowded. Therefore, it may be difficult to incorporate multigrade teaching in your classroom.

The geographical isolation of multigrade teaching may result in teachers being ignored by the educational authorities. They are left alone to fend for themselves.

Disadvantaged local communities may have created an environment in which parents have received little or no schooling. The parents may be ill-equipped to support school activities.

Unsuccessful learners and frustrated teachers feel overworked and discouraged.

Below are a few strategies that may address these challenges.

- Teacher training institutions will need to spend time retraining teachers so that they can adapt to multigrade teaching.
- You are encouraged to seek assistance from parents, learners and other resource persons in the community.

They can help you to deliver instruction effectively in the classroom.

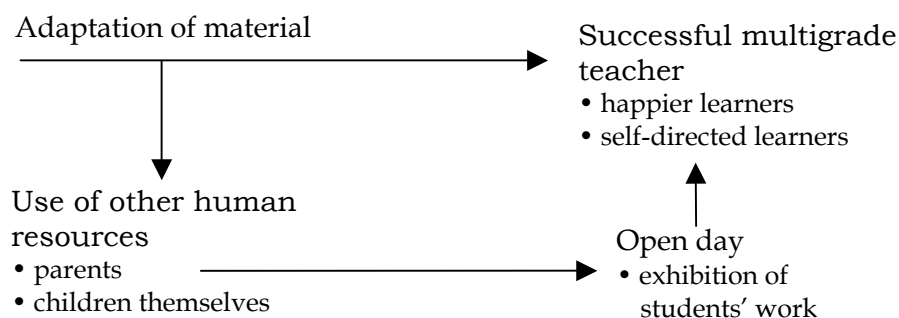
- If you want to convince the community members of the benefits of multigrade teaching, then you must let your students display their knowledge, skills and attitudes.
- You also need to look at cooperation with everyone in the profession: colleagues in your school, nearby schools, other multigrade schools, teacher organisations and associations as well as officials in the Ministry of Education.
- And most importantly, you need to develop a positive attitude towards multigrade teaching.

Lastly, we introduced you to some guidelines for successful multigrade teaching and learning. They include the following:

- Maximise the time devoted to teaching and learning.
- Foster cooperation at all levels: pupils, teachers, parents and community members.
- Establish a network of teachers in similar multigrade schools so that you can learn from each other.
- Cultivate a positive attitude toward cooperative learning.
- Identify and draw on the potential advantages of the school and community.
- Identify your own weaknesses and strive to improve.

Now you might be saying, “All of this! I think I need some kind of support and encouragement to be able to try all this.” Do not worry. The next unit will give you the support that you need. But remember the old saying, “Rome was not built in a day.” Take it easy, little by little, step by step, day by day.

Overcoming the Challenges of Multigrade Teaching

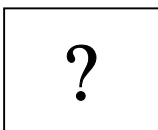


Source: Adapted from Commonwealth Secretariat, Caribbean Community Secretariat and Commonwealth of Learning. (1998: 70). *Multigrade Teaching Program. Module 1: Multigrade Teaching, An Introduction*. London: Commonwealth Secretariat.



Reflection

Now that you have completed this unit, reflect on how you can overcome challenges in multigrade teaching.



Unit Test

1. For teachers, what are some effects of isolation caused by geographical location?
2. Why might learning not occur in a multigrade class?
3. Identify three signs of teacher frustration.
4. How can you encourage cooperation in multigrade teaching?
5. Outline in simple point form how you would develop effective multigrade schools.



Suggested Answers

Self-Assessment 1

In citing the challenges of multigrade teaching, you may wish to consider the points below. However, each point should be discussed in detail. When reviewing your responses, refer to the content in Unit 3.

- The curriculum may be inappropriate for multigrade teaching.
- There may be a lack of planning time.
- Some parents and officials may have a negative attitude towards multigrade teaching.
- The classroom space may be limited.
- Educators may feel isolated due to their geographical location.
- The disadvantaged local environment may not be able to support the school adequately.
- The learners may be at different learning levels.
- Educators may become frustrated because they are poorly prepared to teach in a multigrade setting.

Self-Assessment 2

Your answer regarding the causes of teacher resistance to multigrade teaching might include the following:

- the feelings associated with isolation
- feelings associated with frustration, overwork and discouragement
- dealing with unsuccessful learners
- coping with a poor local environment
- the negative attitudes of other people
- curriculum designed for monograde classrooms.

Your answers will vary depending on your experience. They may include items that are not in the list above.

Practice Activity

1. Answers to this activity will vary depending on experience. If you are inexperienced with multigrade teaching, ask other teachers for feedback and list other suggestions and ideas that you might try at a later date.
2. Reports will differ from individual to individual. Do not forget to describe both successes and failures. When the opportunity arises, share your experience with other educators.

Unit Test

1. Some effects of geographical location:
 - Teachers must spend time, effort and money if they need to go to the educational centres for information and materials.
 - Other educators and Ministry of Education personnel do not visit the school.
2. Possible reasons for unsuccessful learning in a multigrade class:
 - Learners waste time when they are not given work to do.
 - Learners are noisy and unruly when attention is not paid to them.
 - Learners can be quiet but bored.
 - Learners may not receive sufficient personal attention.
 - Irregular attendance by learners and teachers can affect learning.
 - Learners do not finish the prescribed curriculum.
 - Learners do not receive parental support at home.
3. In your answer regarding frustrated teachers, you may discuss the following points:
 - overwork
 - discouragement
 - negative attitude.
4. Cooperation as a principle of successful multigrade teaching:
 - Cooperation is the cornerstone of success and must be fostered at all levels: learners, teachers, parents and community members.
 - Maximise the educational resources within the social structure of the multigrade class. Encourage learners to help each other.
 - Establish a network of teachers in similar small multigrade schools so you can support each other, share experiences and develop educational materials.
5. How to develop successful multigrade schools:
 - Identify the potential advantages present in a particular setting.
 - Maximise the time that the teacher can devote to teaching.
 - Maximise the time that the learners can devote to learning.

- Maximise the educational resources within the social structure of the multigrade class.
- Train the learners in the skills and techniques of independent learning.
- Develop universal concepts and skills through the study of the culture, life and work of the local community and region.
- Draw upon the resources and skills within the community.
- Generate inter-school systems of support and development.

UNIT 4: Teacher Support for Multigrade Teaching



Introduction

In the rationale for this module, we highlighted the phenomenon of multigrade classrooms in the SADC region. Unit 2 discussed the factors that contribute to the establishment or existence of multigrade schools. You were introduced to the geographical, political, cultural and socio-economic factors.

In this unit, you will be introduced to the support that you may need in your multigrade teaching situation. We will explore means by which you can ensure success in the multigrade classroom.

Objectives

After completing this unit, you should be able to:

1. Describe the kind of support you require.
2. Identify where to obtain support.
3. Use the available resources effectively.

Content

This unit will cover the following topics:

- teacher support in a multigrade situation
- sources of support
- the management of resources.

Teacher Support in a Multigrade Situation

Read the following story carefully.

The tea estate school has 163 children enrolled in Grades 1 to 6 and two female teachers. The principal teacher has nine years of teaching experience. She lives on the tea estate. The other teacher travels daily by bus from a small town 10 km away. The bus usually comes late. Already it is 8:30 in the morning, and the school began an hour ago. Grade 1 children sit quietly outside the one-room school under a shed-like construction with no roof.

The morning sun forces them to take shelter on a lower terrace under a roughly constructed thatched enclosure. The enrolment register has been checked. This morning, 100 children have turned up for school, an attendance rate of just 61%. The teacher moves quickly around the grade groups crammed inside the single classroom, giving instructions. Three male monitors, apparently self-appointed, rush around the six groups, giving verbal punishment here, physical punishment there. A Grade 3 girl takes an envelope out of her bag. It contains small picture cards of animals and flowers. Two boys snatch the pictures from her. A quarrel begins, the monitor intervenes, peace is restored and they wait for instructions from the teacher. The Grade 2 children have been assigned language work. One child reads out one or two words from the set book, and the others repeat in chorus. All the Grade 2 children have a language book distributed as part of the government's free textbook scheme. Although all participate in the chorus and all are holding a copy of the relevant book, not all are reading the words.

By 9:00, the bus has arrived, and the second teacher joins the group. The two teachers discuss various activities and suggestions made during the recent in-service seminar. Both teachers had also attended an in-service training course on teaching methods in the lower primary grades. What could they remember from it? They remembered a discussion about introducing a topic common to all grades. For example, the topic could be fruits. The Grade 1 children could talk in small groups about the fruits they eat, and Grade 2 children could write out names of the fruits and compare them.

Source: Adapted from Overseas Development Administration. (1995, January). Serial No. 12: *Educational Research*.

The story above describes scenes that you may see in most of the rural remote schools in the SADC region.

Multigrade teachers, particularly those who teach in the remote areas, are disadvantaged not only in terms of methodology, but also in terms of the economic and social conditions. They need different forms of support. The support may include:

- a deliberate policy by Ministries of Education to recognise the tremendous work being performed in the schools by multigrade teachers,
- professional development support from the central curriculum and administration authorities,

- training programmes that discuss the needs of multigrade teachers, and
- policies ensuring that rural schools are assigned quality instructors.

However, support from the government may not be immediately forthcoming. You, as a teacher, must take pride in your profession and recognise that you are contributing to the well-being and growth of your learners, your community and your country. You are making the world a better place in which to live. You should be proud of your efforts.



Self-Assessment 1

Factors Influencing Teacher Turnover: A Papua New Guinea Study

In Papua New Guinea's West Sepik Province, half the primary schools have no access by road or air. In many cases, teachers must walk 10–12 hours to reach them. Sometimes, teachers must walk up to two days. A study by Kelly, Moipu and Weeks (1982) pointed out that teachers in such schools have many problems: "They are often 'outsiders' who do not speak the community's vernacular. They may be the only educated people in the area. Because the culture of the people is often different from their own, they sometimes suffer 'culture shock'... If at all, isolated schools may be visited only once or twice a year by the inspector, instead of the three times expected. The teachers are often lonely. Sometimes their wives refuse to join them (a) because they do not want to live in an isolated area with inadequate health care for them and their children, (b) because there is no one else to talk to, (c) because goods imported by air cost twice their price on the coast and (d) because there is no market selling fresh food."

In addition, communities in isolated areas are often poor and have very little cash to support the school. The teachers do not get school supplies and must often take classes without the required materials. Letters sent to headquarters, they claim, go unanswered.

The cost of living is high. The K200 allowance for being in an isolated school is not paid on time and is not enough. It takes a month for mail to arrive. Teachers often do not get their pay.

Source: Adapted from Overseas Development Administration. (1995, January). Serial No. 12: *Educational Research*.

Now that you have read through this case study, answer the following questions:

1. What do you think the government should do to improve the distribution of resources?
2. What could the government do to make rural remote schools more attractive to qualified teachers?
3. How should communication between the headquarters and the rural schools be improved?

Suggested answers to this activity are provided at the end of the unit.



Professional Support

The isolation and small number of both teachers and learners in many multigrade schools affect the quality and quantity of professional facilities available to teachers. Due to the lack of classroom materials, teachers may not work to their best ability. Chances of being promoted are restricted at a one-teacher school. The suggestions below may help address these challenges.

- Teachers should be paid to travel to meetings.
- Self-directed professional growth or development should be encouraged by providing distance education material at resource centres.
- Materials should be given to small schools.
- Education officers should visit these small schools regularly, not to inspect but to advise.
- Teachers who have taught at multigrade schools should be considered for promotion.

Staffing Support for Small Schools

Teachers in small schools must teach in multigrade classes. This demands extra preparation and organisational ability. As these teachers have few colleagues to share ideas with, they need constant supervision and support by central authorities. Teachers who are qualified and self-motivated are the ones who should be sent to isolated schools, as they are the ones best suited to deal with the challenges of multigrade teaching. As they face the challenges, they will grow professionally.

Teacher Training for Small Schools

Although multigrade teaching is very common, few training colleges give it adequate attention. Teachers' colleges tend to cater to the common type of single-grade teaching. Most teachers' colleges are located in cities and towns. It is very difficult and expensive for them to arrange for trainees to practise in remote schools and to send lecturers to visit them

there. Nevertheless, multigrade teaching techniques should be given to all trainees to enable them to teach in different situations. In small schools, trainees are able to observe the teachers' and learners' behaviour quite easily. Support in the form of an allowance should be given to trainees in isolated multigrade schools in recognition of their special role. These trainees will help to develop the potential of students throughout the SADC region.

Teacher Specialisation

In small secondary schools, most staff members have to teach at least two subjects. Teacher training colleges can require each trainee to develop skills in at least two subject areas. An education officer with many small schools in an area should train all teachers to provide instruction in at least two subjects.

Below are a few measures education officers could consider when administering and staffing multigrade schools:

- Visit remote schools during in-service training so as to provide more opportunities for isolated teachers.
- Help teachers to find accommodation.
- Make sure postings are fair and transfers made on a rotation basis.
- Try to recruit teachers from rural backgrounds because these individuals are more familiar with rural conditions.

Economic Support

Some small schools are not able to pay their teachers, and the teachers are often on lower salaries than those in big schools. Teachers in small multigrade schools are usually young and inexperienced. It can be costly for them to go to urban areas to visit friends and relatives. In order to reduce this problem, the government should offer bonuses or living and travel allowances for remote teachers. If these measures are put into place, more qualified and effective teachers will be attracted to these small schools.

Community Support

The school is part of the community and the school is established to serve the children of the community.

Some parents in the community may not have had much schooling, but they have experience, and many have skills that can be relevant to the school curriculum. For example, they may be able to help in teaching the following subjects:

- reading
- oral tradition

- history of the village
- arts and crafts
- traditional dances
- agriculture or gardening
- sports
- local technology
- home ecology
- moral and cultural aspects of community living.

They may also organise and supervise school tours or trips within the community or to a nearby village.

Parents and community members can also help or assist with developing educational materials or teaching aids such as mats. They can tell the teacher about each child's background, thereby allowing the teacher to build on it. They can be asked to help deal with undisciplined children. They can be asked to help settle disputes between parents and teachers and between a learner and teacher. Parents can be asked to contribute to a project in the school. For example, they can paint the school or repair broken furniture. They can provide accommodation for teachers. Parents can contribute money or materials to improve conditions in the school.

There are many things teachers can do in order to obtain community support:

- Organise parent-teacher meetings (PTM).
- Discuss with the community when and how it can help.
- Establish good relationships and be willing to cooperate with parents and the entire community.
- Ask the community to identify the parents who are capable and willing to help.
- Recognise that parents have their own work. Do not always expect them to be available when you need them. Plan ahead. Develop a good communication system. Remind those who promised to help.
- Always make arrangements in advance if you need the community's help.
- Allow parents to have access to the school facilities. For example, they may want to use the school for a meeting or to hold church services.
- Show appreciation and encouragement. Always thank parents for their help.

Staff Development

This section covers the following topics:

- the teachers who need staff development,
- quality of schools and quality of teachers, and
- inservice training.

The Teachers Who Need Staff Development

All teachers need to be supported professionally, but each teacher or group of teachers has different needs. Teachers may be experienced and trained, recently trained, or untrained.

In most countries in the SADC region, teachers in rural areas are untrained or are ill-suited for working in rural multigrade schools. There are three primary reasons for this situation:

- Ambitious and well-qualified teachers are able to secure posts in desirable environments. They are usually employed in urban areas.
- Administrators find themselves under great pressure to post the best teachers in urban schools.
- Remote areas are sometimes used as ‘dumping grounds’ for teachers who are problematic.

Teachers in small rural schools are professionally more isolated than teachers in big schools. There are fewer colleagues with whom to exchange ideas. Education officers should give these teachers additional help and provide constant supervision.

In small schools, it can be difficult to stream pupils according to their abilities. The teachers are faced by multigrade classes with a wide range of ages and abilities. This makes teaching more challenging. Training colleges need to pay more attention to these challenges so that teachers will be better equipped to handle learners in a multigrade class.

Administrators should ensure that good teachers are posted to small schools. When teachers are well supported, the quality of work will improve to the expected standard. Teachers would then feel that their efforts are being recognised. When good results are produced in small schools, administrators should note their appreciation for the efforts taken. Consequently, teachers in small schools will become more motivated and committed to their work.

Quality of Schools and Quality of Teachers

Particular attention must be given to the needs of small schools when teachers are posted and when support systems are supplied. In small schools, the quality of education is more dependent on the quality of individual teachers than is the case in big schools. In a single-teacher school, the personality of that individual can influence the whole education process. The

education officer must ensure that teachers receive back-up material and support. Workshops and in-service courses must be conducted. Educational officers may need to assist those who are likely to experience difficulties in travelling to these in-service events.

In-Service Training

The multigrade teachers have few colleagues in their situation and so they have greater needs for professional enrichment. Education officers could organise special courses for these teachers. This can be done by distance education, by radio lessons or in residential sessions during school holidays.

Resources

Resources can be classified into various categories. In this unit, we will focus on instructional resources and how to manage these resources. By 'instructional resources', we mean resources used for teaching and learning.

A multigrade teacher needs a variety of resources to cope with the varying needs of his or her learners. It is also important to know how to choose the most appropriate resources and how to manage the resources to suit the learners' needs and your lesson objectives.

Multigrade teaching is much easier if you have resources such as:

- adequate classroom space,
- portable chalkboard,
- printed materials,
- classroom library or reading corner,
- electronic resources, and
- other instructional resources.

Space

Multigrade teaching requires spacious classrooms so that learners can move and interact freely without disturbing one another. The classroom should be protected from wind and rain. When the weather is suitable, learners can also be taught outside the classroom.

Portable Chalkboard

The chalkboard is probably the most common resource in your classroom, yet it is sometimes improperly used or under-used.

In a multigrade teaching situation, a portable chalkboard, one that can be moved from one place to another, is desirable. If possible, more than one chalkboard is required. At times, the

chalkboard can be used as a screen to separate the class or as a side panel where the class exists in an area by itself.

You must ensure that chalkboards are allocated at positions in the classroom where they can be seen easily by all learners. You can use a chalkboard as a notice board with instructions for tasks that are to be completed by particular learners. At other times, you may place reminders to students on the chalkboard. Exercises or notes can be retained on the chalkboard beyond the teaching period. These can be used as references. The chalkboard can also be used to record content or instructions for different grade levels.

Whatever strategy you use, note that materials carefully presented on the chalkboard can influence learning.

Printed Materials

When we use the term ‘printed materials’, we are referring to textbooks, newspapers, magazines, story books, games and non-book materials.

In multigrade teaching, printed materials are important for enhancing the development of independent study. They are an integral part of the instructional process.

Textbooks. There is a need for textbooks that are written with the assumption that all children are not at the same academic level, and they are not under the constant guidance of the teacher.

Theme-based textbooks or textbooks that cover subject matter across the curricula topics are very useful. You should use non-graded textbooks and textbooks with self-assessments or evaluation activities. These textbooks can be used in self-instruction or independent study situations.

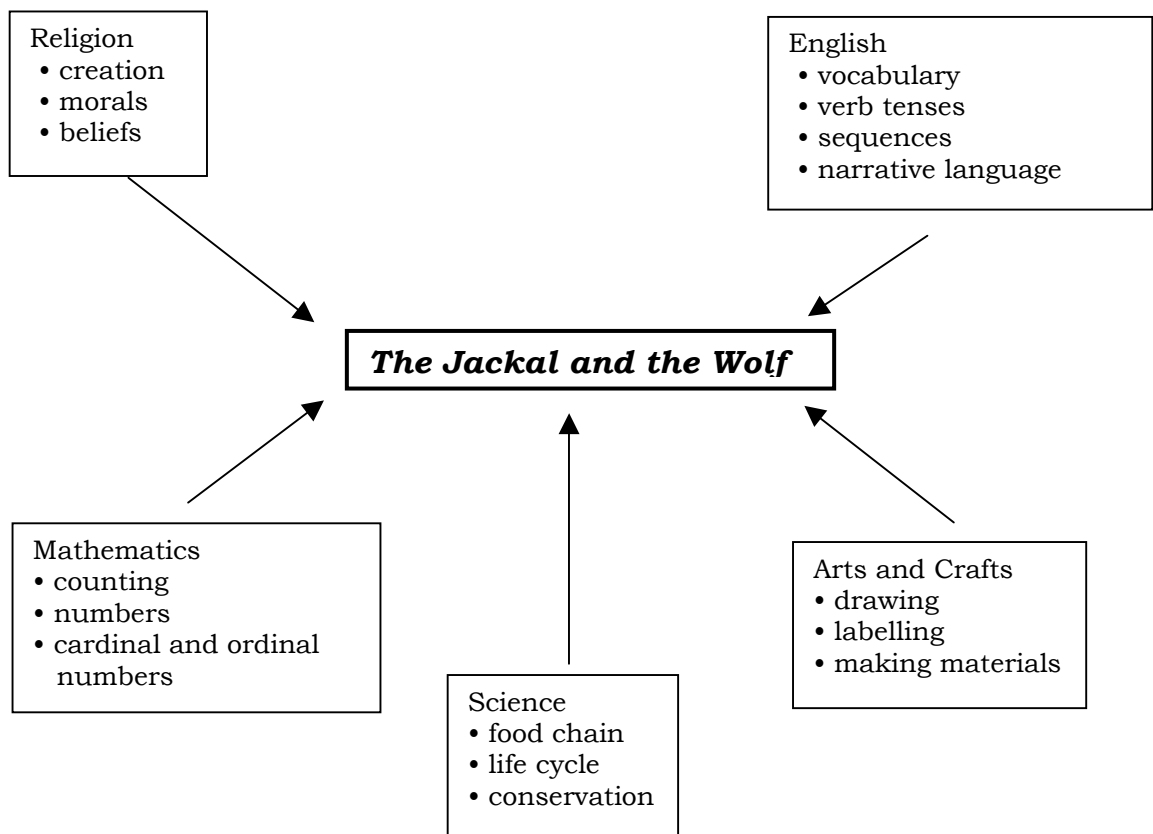
Textbooks are important because they allow individuals to learn at their own pace. They can be reread and therefore act as a form of reinforcement. Textbooks and other reading materials can provide rich visual stimulation. In addition to textbooks, you will need graphics and pictures. Many learners are visually oriented and respond positively when graphics, pictures or photographs are used.

Newspapers. Newspapers provide authentic information and can be used as instructional materials. They can be used during your discussion of a variety of topics in subject areas such as mathematics, science, geography and social studies. Newspapers are readily available. If you are in a remote area, you can ask local shops, church organisations or government institutions to donate old newspapers on a regular basis.

Magazines. Different kinds of magazines can be used as reading resources. You can ask learners to bring these from their homes or ask the community to donate any used magazines or newspapers. Like newspapers, magazines can open the students' minds to events and ideas that lie beyond the community.

Story Books. Stories can be used as a basis for teaching many subjects.

Examine the diagram below, which is based on the story *The Jackal and the Wolf*. Note how you can use one story to discuss a variety of subjects.



Games. Learners enjoy games. Games are fun. Teachers can easily adapt games for cooperative learning and problem-solving activities. Games can be used to build strong teams.

Games allow all learners to participate, compete and enjoy themselves. There are a variety of games, including board, card and dice games. Some examples of games and their educational benefits are given below. Try some of these games with your class.

Examples of Board, Card and Dice Games

Pelmanism	A memory game played with cards that can be adapted for different subjects.
Happy Families	A card game that can be used to practise memorisation of any kind.
Snap	Useful for practising number and word recognition.
Snakes and Ladders	Can be used to practise word counting or adapted for activities in several subject areas.
Bingo	Can be adapted and used in activities to help children acquire and reinforce concepts and principles in various subject areas.
Scrabble	Well-known game for developing vocabulary and spelling skills.
Quizzes	Can be used for practice and evaluation.
Simon Says	Useful for practising listening skills. A version of the game can be played using written instructions.
Hangman	Used to reinforce vocabulary work. Can be played by the whole class using the chalkboard.
Charades	Can be played with words from the Language Arts curriculum.
Twenty Questions	Will help to develop logical reasoning skills.
Going to the Market	Excellent for memory and vocabulary work.
Chalkboard Drawing	Used to develop skills of prediction. You draw part of a sequence and ask learners to guess what will happen next, or draw part of a picture and ask learners to guess what it is.

Source: Commonwealth Secretariat, Caribbean Community Secretariat and Commonwealth of Learning. (1998). *Multigrade Teaching Program. Module 4: Teaching Strategies for Multigrade Education*. London: Commonwealth Secretariat.

Non-Book Materials. Non-book materials are pamphlets, reports and texts that can be used as additional reading resources.

Library or Reading Corner. Research has demonstrated that it is valuable to have a classroom library or reading corner because this area can cater to the different needs of learners found in multigrade classrooms or schools. The learners' own books can be the first books in your reading corner or library.

All the printed materials we have discussed can be organised into a classroom library or reading corner. In order to facilitate the use of a reading corner, you need to implement a manageable loan system.

A reading corner may also allow you to work with a particular group or individual while others are working on their own.

Electronic Resources

Electronic resources include radio, audio tape recorder, videocassette recorder, television and computer.

Radio. The radio is frequently the most affordable piece of electronic equipment that you can use in teaching and learning situations. You do not need a source of electricity to operate some radios. Today, a few radios are equipped with a handle that allows you to wind a spring inside the radio. The movement of the spring generates enough electricity to operate the radio. No batteries or electrical outlets are required. If you do need a battery or batteries, the radios can work for many hours. Radios are inexpensive and portable.

In order to use radios effectively in instructional situations, you must be familiar with the programmes and the frequencies on which they are aired. Radio programmes can stimulate discussion among learners and you. They can bring the world beyond your community to your doorstep. Consider asking students not only to listen to the programmes, but also to answer questions or do projects based on what they heard.

Tape Recorder. The audio tape recorder is an electronic device that can be used to:

- provide whole group instruction,
- address the needs of individual learners who are experiencing difficulty with particular topics,
- develop listening skills,
- record learners so that they can hear their own voices and evaluate their language or speaking skills,
- record stories, readings, case studies and motivational material, and
- teach singing.

Audiocassette tapes are simple to make, duplicate, store and distribute.

Video Recorder. Video recorders provide both visual and audio stimuli. They require electricity and some require a knowledgeable person to operate and use them. However, they are useful electronic instructional resources for multigrade teaching. If learners are taught how to use them, they can

operate them and work on their own. Students can record themselves performing a skill. Then you can review the videotape with them and indicate areas in which improvement is required. Videotapes or videocassettes are especially useful for students who lack reading skills or need to review material frequently.

Television. Television is another important resource in a multigrade classroom, as it provides another source of audiovisual materials. Unlike the audiocassette recorder and video recorder, television cannot be interrupted or stopped and then restarted where you left off. However, it is capable of providing a wider range of programmes and activities. Television, like radio, has immediacy and credibility. It can cover events and report on ideas that are happening or being discussed right now! If you are able, record television broadcasts. Then replay the recording when it is appropriate for your students.

Computers. Computers are becoming increasingly common. They can accept information from different sources, process it and produce output that addresses individual needs. If your computer is connected to the Internet, you and your students will have access to a wide range of instructional resources. The Internet can be used to:

- find information,
- post notices,
- send electronic mail,
- establish discussion groups with students and colleagues, and
- conduct audioconferencing and videoconferencing.

The greatest advantage of using the Internet is that it increases accessibility, not only to knowledge, but also to people and ideas, regardless of their location.

Multigrade teachers and learners can benefit greatly from using computers as instructional resources.

- Computers can be used on a one-to-one basis, thus providing truly individualised learning for students of varying grades and abilities.
- They can be used with small groups of learners and consequently foster socialisation.
- They can facilitate problem-solving techniques and self-evaluation.
- They provide opportunities for practice.
- They foster creativity.

Other Instructional Resources

Other instructional resources are concrete objects that can be easily obtained in your environment. A variety of raw materials such as cardboard, empty boxes, tins, shells, stones, wood, seeds, sticks, animals, insects, bottles, labels and sand are easily available.

You and your learners can use these resources to develop instructional materials. Some advantages of these resources are listed below:

- They are relevant and real. Learners can see them, touch them and smell them.
- They are user-friendly.
- They can be reused or recycled.
- Resources such as animals and insects help learners to develop a respect for living things and to take responsibility for them.
- They cost little or nothing.

If you do not have access to all the resources listed in Unit 4, do not despair. The best way you can instill learning is to care for and encourage your students. Get to know them. Provide them with small challenges, then increasingly more difficult ones. Give them positive, effective feedback with a smile. Instructional resources are only tools. They are not teachers!

Resource Management

Below are some suggested procedures for managing instructional resources. It is good to know about the types of resources, where to obtain them and how to prepare them, but it is also important to be aware of how to manage them carefully.

Storage

You need an adequate storage area for equipment and learning materials. Systematic storage is essential to provide accessibility and easy assessment of your resources. By labelling the cupboards, filing cabinets and learning materials, you will facilitate easy access to the resources. Learners may have some suggestions regarding how to arrange and store the equipment. There are various reference systems at other schools, resource centres and libraries that can give you ideas on how to arrange and store resources. Visit these sites.

Documentation

A catalogue indicating what kinds of materials are available, where they are stored and what you can use them for is essential. Classification according to subject areas may be useful for easy access. Ensure that all resources are

documented and that you check regularly regarding the status of all items.

Maintenance

Obtaining resources may be easy, but maintaining them can be difficult. Resources can wear out and require repairs. In your budget planning, always allocate some funds for maintenance.

Local expertise can be used to maintain and service resources. For example, a local electrician or builder could be approached to repair or service the resources. Members of the community may volunteer to do this work for free.

Monitoring System

It is highly recommended that a monitoring system be put in place to check on how the resources are used, who uses them and how often they are used.

A simple card system like the one below can be used.

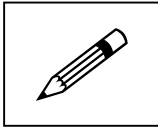
Name of Resource:
Number in Stock:
Name of Borrower:
Date checked out:
Signature:
Date checked in:

Source: Commonwealth Secretariat, Caribbean Community Secretariat and Commonwealth of Learning. (1998: 64). *Multigrade Teaching Programme. Module 7: Resources and Resource Management*. London: Commonwealth Secretariat.

Rotating Resources

You should rotate resources in order to keep learners motivated. By rotating resources, you are exposing learners to different materials and therefore to different perspectives that may result in incidental learning. You are also catering to different learning styles because some children learn best by touching and moving things instead of reading about them.

Also, by rotating resources, you are avoiding over-use of some resources and making space for other resources that may be of interest to your students.



Self-Assessment 2

1. Describe professional help that could be given to teachers in small schools.
2. List and discuss with a colleague the types of help your community can offer to you as a multigrade teacher.
3. List resources that you consider important for a multigrade teacher to use in order to teach effectively. Why do you consider these resources to be important?
4. What simple resource(s) would you use to do each of the following:
 - a. allow students to record themselves reading a story
 - b. allow you to review students performing a skill
 - c. provide immediacy and credibility
 - d. enable students to create something for themselves

Suggested answers to these questions are provided at the end of this unit.



Practice Activity

State whether each of these statements about multigrade teaching support is true or false.

1. Teachers who teach at multigrade schools need extra preparation and organisational ability.
2. The isolation and the small number of both teachers and learners affect the quality of professionalism.
3. Teachers can work satisfactorily even if there is a lack of classroom materials.
4. Although multigrade classes are less prominent than single-grade classes, teachers' colleges give adequate attention to training teachers how to manage a multigrade class.
5. Governments frequently offer bonuses as well as living and travel allowances to teachers who teach in remote areas.
6. At small schools, teacher trainees are able to observe the teaching and the learners' behaviours quite easily. It is more difficult to make the same observations at large schools.
7. Though some parents may not have had much schooling, they have vast experience and many skills that they can impart to learners.
8. All teachers require professional support, but each teacher has different needs to be met.
9. Teachers in small rural multigrade schools have fewer colleagues with whom to exchange ideas.
10. In a multigrade teaching situation, one or more mobile chalkboards are desirable.

Summary



In this unit, you have been exposed to different types of support that you may require to carry out your instructional duties as a multigrade teacher. We have also outlined a variety of educational resources and discussed how you can manage them effectively. It is now up to you as a teacher of a multigrade class to select accessible materials that are appropriate for your learners.

Reflection



Multigrade teachers frequently find that they are in great need of instructional resources. Think about where you will get such resources. Then, in writing, outline procedures for managing these newly acquired resources.

Unit Test



1. List the types of support that multigrade teachers require.
2. Describe how the resources in a multigrade school should be managed.
3. List the instructional resources that you could use to accomplish the tasks listed below. First, list the simplest, most accessible resource that you could use. Then, if appropriate, list a resource that may be difficult for you to obtain.
 - a. to record assignments that students need to complete
 - b. to remind all students of an upcoming event
 - c. to tell stories
 - d. to help students who find reading difficult
 - e. to help students develop independent study skills
 - f. to arouse imagination and creativity
 - g. to provide authentic, current information
 - h. to encourage socialisation
 - i. to give students access to people and ideas beyond the classroom
 - j. to allow students to control the time, location and pace of learning
4. Look at the following list of the people who could give you support in your multigrade class. Indicate the type of support each person could offer.

a. musician	e. artisan
b. policeman	f. cleaner
c. farmer	g. parent
d. athlete	



Suggested Answers

Self-Assessment 1

1. The government should give remote schools first priority when resources are distributed.
2. The government could increase the allowance for work in isolated schools.
3. Education officers should receive incentives to go to remote schools. Perhaps visits to remote schools should receive more credit or weight than visits to single-class schools.

Self-Assessment 2

1. Professional help for teachers in small schools
 - Pay teachers travel allowances so they can attend meetings more easily.
 - Encourage self-directed professional growth.
 - Give professional materials to small schools first.
 - Increase visitations by educational officers.
 - Give multigrade teachers chances for promotion.
2. Community support for teachers in small schools
 - Help with homework.
 - Organise and supervise school trips.
 - Conduct fund-raising activities.
 - Assist in settling disputes between parent and teacher, or teacher and learner.
3. Multigrade teachers need at least the following resources:
 - chalkboard
 - printed materials, including textbooks, story books, newspapers and magazines
 - games
 - a reading corner
 - concrete objects that are appropriate for the subject matter being taught.

All the above resources are required so that the teacher can:

- provide information,
- provide students with the opportunity to apply their skills,
- encourage creativity,
- allow students to work on their own, and
- foster socialisation.

4. a. audiocassettes, videocassettes
b. audiocassettes, videocassettes
c. radio, television
d. real objects

Practice Activity

1. True 6. True
2. True 7. True
3. True 8. True
4. False 9. True
5. False 10. True

Unit Test

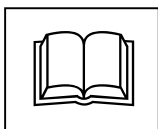
1. Examples of support:
 - professional support for self-growth and skill development
 - economic support that would enable teachers to buy teaching materials
 - community support in the form of money, skills and knowledge
2. All materials should be labelled and stored in secure cupboards. The materials should be documented or catalogued. As the material is used, it must be monitored. A card system can be used to record when the materials are borrowed and by whom. All materials need to be maintained or they will wear out.
3. Instructional resources to accomplish specific tasks:
 - a. chalkboard
 - b. chalkboard
 - c. audiocassettes, videocassettes, radio, television
 - d. audiocassettes, videocassettes, radio, television
 - e. printed materials, textbooks, audiocassettes, videocassettes
 - f. stories in many forms, real objects
 - g. newspapers, magazines, radio, television
 - h. games
 - i. radio, television, the Internet
 - j. any printed material, audiocassettes, videocassettes

4.

<i>Person</i>	<i>Type of Support</i>
Musician	Knowledge and skills in music, e.g., names of musical instruments
Policeman	Information about laws and safety, e.g., road crossing
Farmer	Knowledge and skills related to farming or gardening, e.g., how to grow oranges
Athlete	Knowledge and skills related to sport, e.g., fitness programmes
Artisan	Training in crafts such as weaving and pottery
Cleaner	Knowledge of cleanliness, e.g., sweeping the classroom
Parents	Background information on learners, assistance in the classroom and on field trips, fund raising, conflict resolution

UNIT 5: Making a Scheme of Work and a Unit Plan





Introduction

In Unit 4, you learned more about the support necessary for successful multigrade teaching. (If you haven't tried some of the ideas from Unit 4 in your class yet, you should do this soon.)

Reread the conversation between Pat and Kully on the opening page of Unit 5. Reflect on it.

In this unit, we will discuss various aspects of planning for instruction and outline the key steps in the planning process. The unit will focus specifically on making a scheme of work and a unit plan.

Objectives

After completing this unit, you should be able to:

1. Discuss the value of planning for instructional purposes.
2. Explain why a scheme of work is important.
3. Explain why a unit plan is needed.
4. Prepare a scheme of work and a unit plan.

Content

This unit will cover the following topics:

- planning for instruction
- steps in the planning process
- scheme of work and unit plan.

Planning

Before we get to the details of making a scheme of work, let us consider why we need to plan for instruction. Planning is one of the keys to a successful instructional programme. It helps us:

- select relevant goals and objectives,
- make decisions about the content and structure of the instructional programme,
- ensure that necessary resources are acquired, and
- evaluate the effectiveness of the programme.

Planning requires dedication, time, research and resources. It is exceedingly important in multigrade situations. It takes planning to effectively address the variety of needs in the multigrade classroom.

What Is a Scheme of Work?

A scheme of work is a plan or a schedule that shows what you will teach each week of the term during the school year. Each teacher in a school makes a scheme of work from a given curriculum and adjusts it each year as needed.

Why do we make a scheme of work?

- To identify the topics that you and your learners must cover within a given period and, most important, to avoid gaps in students' learning.
- To assist you in establishing realistic targets and to assess whether you have achieved those targets.

Without a scheme of work, you might teach only half of all the topics you need to teach and may miss some important topics.

Schemes of work also facilitate continuity. When a teacher leaves the system or is absent, schemes serve as a map of the material that the new teacher needs to cover. A scheme of work also helps us think about the learning sequence.

Planning a scheme of work for the multigrade classroom helps you to ensure that learners of different class levels are always engaged in activities that are:

- interesting,
- meaningful,
- stimulating, and
- conducive to learning.

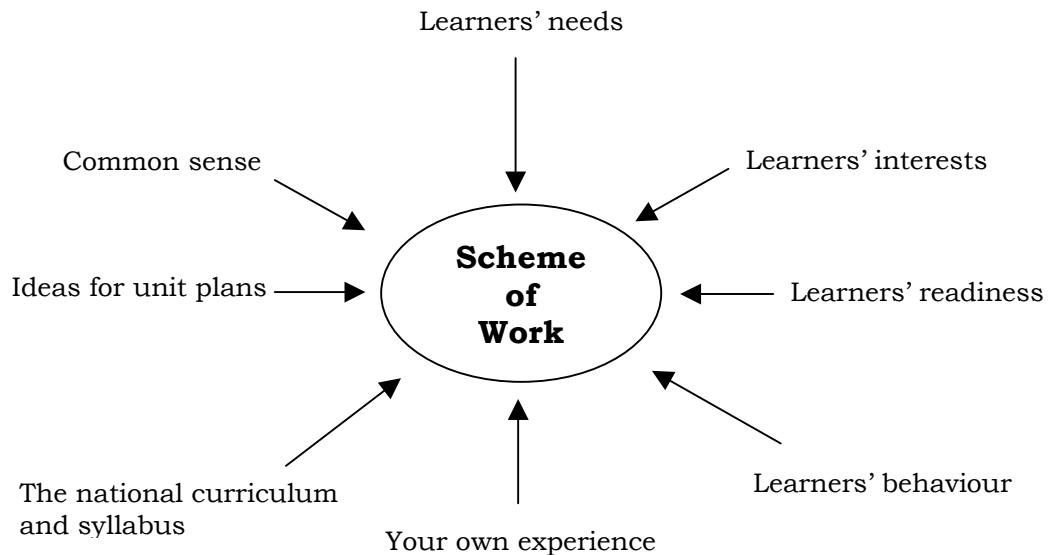
A scheme of work makes it easier for you to sustain the interest of learners and ensure that they learn. To achieve these goals, you must understand, among other things:

- how children learn,
- the teaching methods that are effective in multigrade situations,
- the approaches that you can use to organise content and to group learners, and
- the steps involved in preparing a scheme of work.

Preparing for instruction is like preparing to build a house. We start with basic things like the foundation, the floor and the walls. Then, we build the roof. If we try to build the roof before we build the walls, the building collapses. If we try to teach learners how to solve quadratic equations before we teach them how to solve linear equations, the learners will be confused. How does one decide what to teach? You decide what to teach by considering:

- your own experience and common sense,
- learners' needs, interests, readiness and behaviour,
- the national curriculum and syllabus, and
- ideas for unit plans.

The following figure illustrates the link between a scheme of work and the concepts listed above.



Your Own Experience and Common Sense

Suppose your learners know how to add single-digit numbers and the next topic you want to teach them is the addition of two-digit numbers. But then you notice learners taking stones out of a pile and counting them. What are the learners doing? They are performing subtraction, even though they may not know it. Because of this observation, you decide that instead of teaching how to add two-digit numbers, you will teach how to subtract single-digit numbers. Common sense helps you adapt your plan and change the sequence of what you intended to teach.

Learners

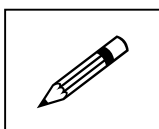
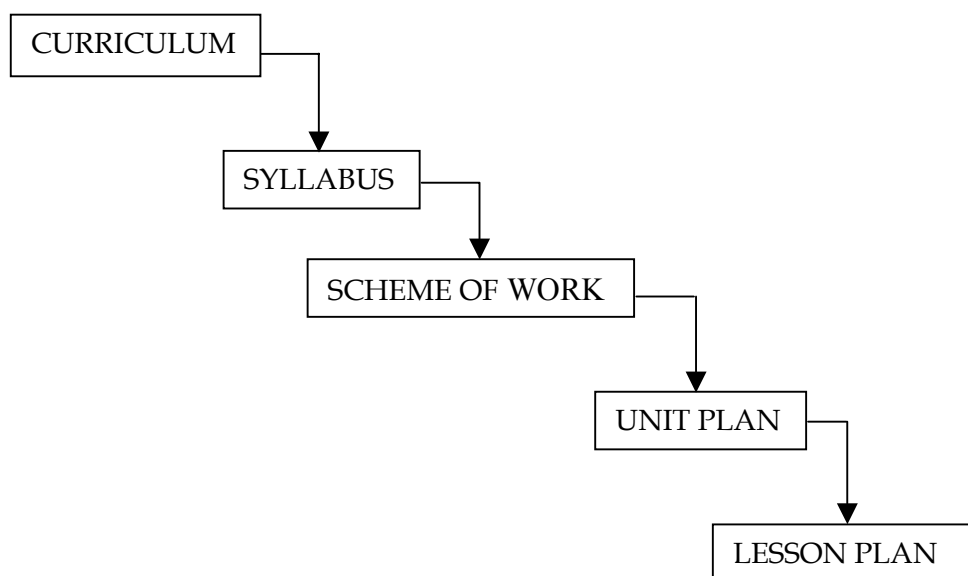
Whenever we teach something, we decide in which direction learners should proceed next. This might be based on the learners' needs, interests and readiness. A boy may bring money to school and want to learn how to add it. The child is ready to learn. A girl knows how to count to 20, so you continue counting with her up to 30 or more. Whenever possible, take advantage of situations in which students have a need to learn or are motivated to learn something that is relevant to their daily lives.

The National Curriculum and Syllabuses

The national curriculum is the total content to be taught in a given subject over several years. For example, the mathematics curriculum for basic education describes everything to be

taught in mathematics from Grades 1 to 10. A curriculum is divided into syllabuses. A syllabus is the total content to be taught in a given year for one subject at one level. For example, the mathematics Grade 1 syllabus only describes everything to be taught in a Grade 1 mathematics class.

A syllabus is then translated into a scheme of work, which in turn is divided into unit plans. Unit plans are then divided into lesson plans. The figure below illustrates these steps.



Self-Assessment 1

1. Why is planning a key to a successful instructional programme?
2. Describe what a scheme of work is and why you need it. Also, state what you need to consider when preparing a scheme of work. You may want to include a diagram in your response.

Answers to this activity can be found at the end of this unit.



Steps Involved in Planning a Scheme of Work

Study the following scenario. It is about Brigid, a teacher who is planning to teach three grades at the same time.

Making a Scheme of Work

After developing her timetable, Brigid was now ready to plan her scheme of work for three grade levels. This seemed a challenging task since the scheme of work had to be different from that she had planned for her previous year's class, which was single-grade.

“Phew!” she thought, as she tried to decide what to do. “I have to deal with three groups. Grade 1 is new to school life, while Grade 2 and Grade 3 have some prior knowledge of the curriculum content. What must I do?”

Fortunately, Brigid had received some training on planning for multigrade classes. As she reflected on what she had been taught and browsed through the curriculum and syllabuses, she realised that she could use three organisational approaches.

1. **Subject grouping:** Brigid can let all the classes do some of the same subject areas together. Two of the subjects she can teach in this manner are technology and official language.
2. **Subject staggering:** Brigid can let Grade 2 and 3 students do science while Grade 1 students do social studies.
3. **Common subject grouping:** Brigid can let all the classes focus on the same areas but at different levels.

After checking the timetable, she decided to develop the following scheme of work:

- The mathematics and language arts periods would be held in the morning and would be used for common subject groupings.
- Social studies would be taught in the first session in the afternoon from Monday to Thursday. She would try subject staggering.
- Common subject groupings would be used for the second and third periods of the afternoon.
- She would work with Grade 3 during the last period of the day after the Grade 1 and 2 students were dismissed at 12:30 in the afternoon.

Now that Brigid had determined the grouping strategy for various periods of the day, she searched the curriculum for:

- common topics for three grade levels in mathematics and language arts
- the approach to use in organising the content
- the objectives that should be covered.

She then did some research, identified resources for learning centres and wrote her scheme of work in the weekly plan book that she had drawn up.

Source: Adapted from Commonwealth Secretariat and Caribbean Community Secretariat and Commonwealth of Learning. (1998: 22-24). *Multigrade Teaching Programme. Module 9: Preparing the Scheme of Work and Lesson Plan*. London: Commonwealth Secretariat.

Now that you have read the scenario, pause for a moment and think carefully about the steps that Brigid has taken as she plans her scheme of work.

1. She decided on possible organisational approaches or ways of grouping her learners: subject grouping, subject staggering and common subject grouping.
2. She consulted the timetable to determine what subject areas she would need to teach. (This is particularly important in the multigrade situation because it is possible to forget to cover some areas.)
3. She consulted the curriculum and syllabuses to determine the topics she would teach, how she should structure the content and the long- and short-term objectives that she should cover.
4. She identified an appropriate organisational approach for each period of the day.
5. She researched information on the topics.
6. She decided on the activities that each group of learners would need to complete while she was working with another group.
7. She identified resources that she needed in order to set up learning centres in the classroom. (Teachers need to have several useful activities so that pupils can be occupied at all times.)
8. She wrote her scheme of work in her weekly plan book.

A Page of Brigid's Weekly Scheme of Work Plan Book

This page shows Brigid's plan for a week of mathematics classes.

<i>Subject:</i> Mathematics	Grade 1	Grade 2	Grade 3
Topic	What is a set?	Review: • What is a set? • Cardinal numbers. New: • Equal sets.	Review: • What is a set? • Cardinal numbers, equal sets. New: • Equivalent sets.
Content	Define a set.	Define cardinal numbers and equal sets.	Define equivalent sets.
Objectives	Learners will: • List the members of sets. • Draw members of sets. • Colour drawings.	Learners will use objects to draw pairs of equal sets.	Learners will be able to use a handout with pairs of sets to identify equivalent sets.
Materials	Different objects	Pebbles, bottle tops, seeds, shells	Same as Grade 2, handout worksheets.

Source: Adapted from Commonwealth Secretariat, Caribbean Community Secretariat and Commonwealth of Learning. (1998: 29-28). *Multigrade Teaching Programme. Module 9: Preparing the Scheme of Work and Lesson Plan*. London: Commonwealth Secretariat.

In a scheme of work, you can show different components of the plan:

- Topic – the subject of the lesson.
- Content – defines the topic or outlines the main concept.
- Objectives – state what the learners must be able to do.
- Materials – identify the necessary resources.
- Methods – describe the strategies the teacher will use.

- Independent Work – identifies the activities in which the learners will engage while the teacher is with another class group.
- Evaluation – describes the method the teacher will use to measure the success of the teaching-learning activity.

Brigid used only the first four components in her plan. The approach used in this scheme of work is for common subject groupings.

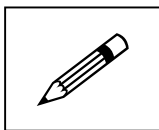
The content included in a scheme of work is based on the syllabus for each subject. Remember that a syllabus is the total content to be taught in a given year for one subject at one grade level. An example of a syllabus for mathematics is presented below.

Syllabus for a Portion of the Mathematics Curriculum

<i>Subject:</i> Mathematics	Competency	Term 1	Term 2	Term 3
Concepts 1.1 Counting 1.2 Numerals	1. Correctly count to 20 using concrete objects, pictures, measuring activities.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Correctly count to 10 using concrete objects. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Correctly count to 15 using concrete objects. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Correctly count to 20 using concrete objects.
	2. Correctly count backwards from 20 to 0 using objects.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Correctly count backwards from 10 to 0 using objects. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Correctly count backwards from 15 to 0 using objects. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Correctly count backwards from 20 to 0 using objects.
	3. Correctly count in 2's up to 10 using objects.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Correctly count in 2's up to 6 using objects. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Correctly count in 2's up to 10 using objects. 	
	4. Correctly count up to 20 without using objects.		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Correctly count up to 10 without using objects. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Correctly count up to 20 without using objects.
	5. Correctly count in 2's up to 10 without using objects.			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Correctly count in 2's up to 10 without using objects
	6. Correctly count backwards from 10 to 0 without using objects.		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Correctly count backwards from 5 to 0 without using objects. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Correctly count backwards from 10 to 0 without using objects.
	7. Breakdown as with 1.1.			

Source: Ministry of Basic Education and Culture, Republic of Namibia. (1996). *Teacher Basic Competencies Manual*. Windhoek, Namibia: Author.

You can use the information provided in the syllabus to help you plan for the terms of the school year. Note that you might need to spread out difficult competencies over two or three terms.



Self-Assessment 2

1. Study Brigid's scheme of work for the week and then do the following exercise.
 - a. Name the organisational approach that Brigid has used.
 - b. Why do you think Brigid prepared a separate plan for each class?
 - c. List the components of Brigid's plan and briefly describe how each component assists in planning for classes.
2. State the name which we can use to describe the simultaneous study of the same content by all class levels.



Unit Plan

After organising the scheme of work, you need to develop a unit plan. The unit plan helps you to organise your teaching ideas and activities. Let us look at the unit plan in detail.

What Is a Unit Plan?

A unit plan:

- focuses on teaching and learning experiences that are organised around chosen topics or themes.
- extends for a period of four weeks or more. In simple terms, a unit is an idea we use for organising instruction.
- is based on the syllabus and the scheme of work. It contains broad goals and specific objectives that serve as guidelines for the selection of appropriate content and activities.

Why Do We Plan Units?

- Organising the subject matter, teaching methods, learning activities and materials in a sequence helps students to learn.
- Structuring the learning experiences around a single theme or topic over a period of time helps students relate the ideas in individual lessons to a broader concept.

The Components of a Unit

The components of a teaching plan generally reflect the major components of the curriculum.

The main components of a unit are

- goals,
- concepts, skills and attitudes,
- objectives,
- activities,
- materials, and
- evaluation.

A unit plan should outline the instructional purpose, content, teaching strategies and evaluation methods.

If it is to be an effective guide to teaching, the unit plan should also include:

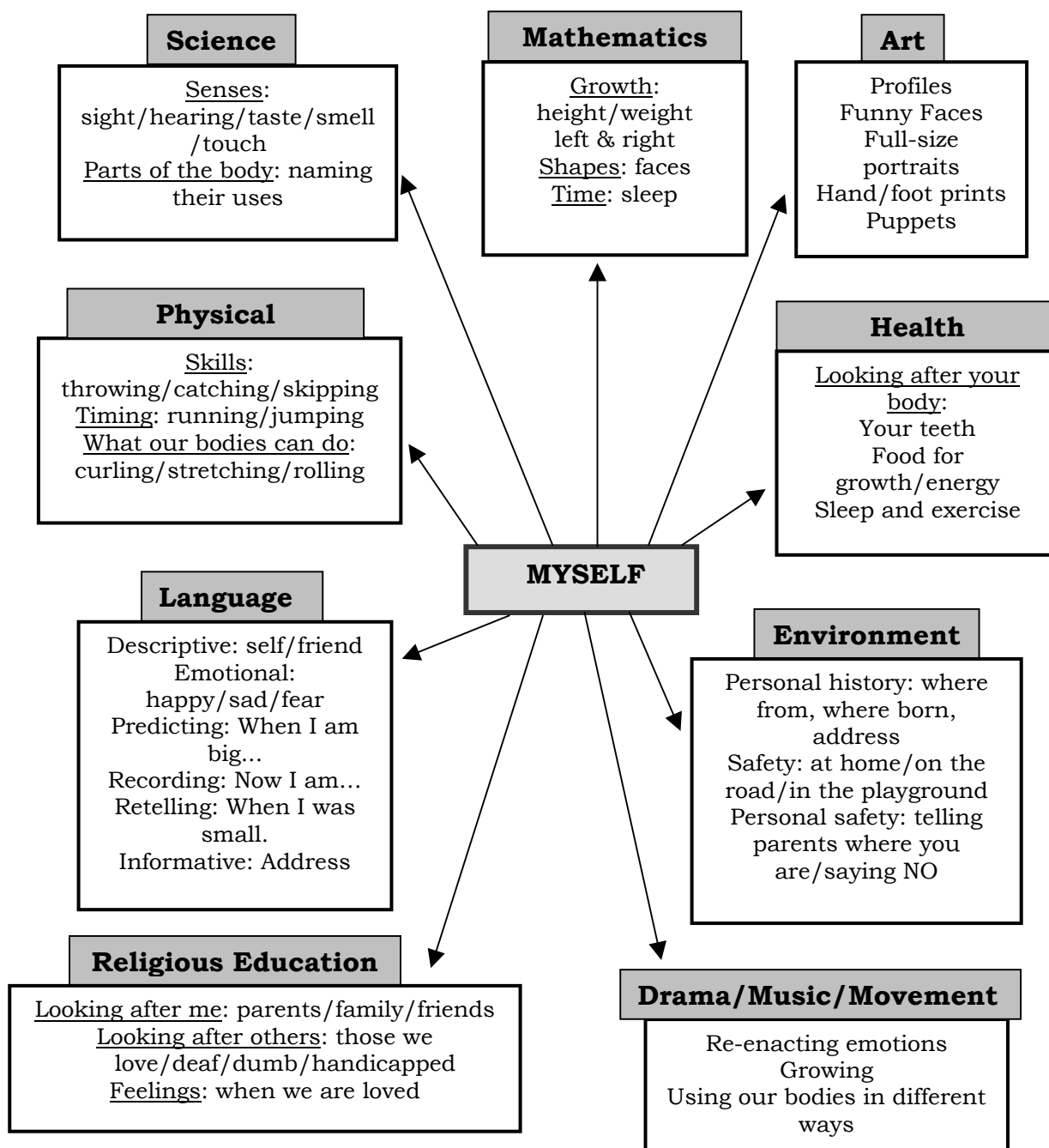
- a unit title,
- the class level(s), and
- the duration of each activity or component.

Steps to Follow in Planning a Unit

When planning a unit, you should consult the syllabus and decide on the topic or theme of the unit. For example, if the topic is 'myself', then 'myself' could be developed into a unit for English, mathematics, health and environmental studies, art, science, physical education, drama/music/movement and religious education.

As you do this, think about the lesson activities you would like to use. What materials could you use? What books would be helpful? Are they available? How can you use the materials and books in each subject? Which outcomes will the learners achieve? In this example about 'myself', theme-based planning is used to plan the unit.

Example of a Theme Approach



When you finish developing some ideas for the term or unit plans, look at your scheme of work again. You will notice that the topics and competencies are connected. You are teaching a larger topic, 'myself', using different subjects, e.g., mathematics and English, to understand the topic. This is called thematic instruction. Individual skills are derived from a theme across the different subjects.

In a thematic approach, you may need to reorganise some topics or competencies in your scheme of work. Now do the unit plans for other terms of the year.

Remember: You should organise your planning around topics you are teaching, and the learner's needs – NOT necessarily according to the order of competencies in the syllabus. However, you should check to see if you have included the most important competencies.

When you have finished your unit plans for all the terms, look again at the competencies you have included. Tick them off in your syllabus. Then, ask yourself:

- Have I missed any important competencies?
- How can I add items I may have missed to my unit plans?

When you have completed your unit plans, make a lesson plan for each day. In Unit 6, you will learn how to make lesson plans.



Practice Activity

Look at the syllabus for the subject you are teaching. Make a scheme of work using just one topic as an example. You need not make an entire scheme of work for this exercise. Use just one syllabus and develop one topic. Once you have completed your scheme for the topic and its related outcomes or competencies, discuss your scheme of work with a colleague.

- What was difficult about this exercise?
- Was the exercise helpful?
- In order to complete the development of your scheme of work, what do you need to know?

Note: You are experimenting. It will take some time for you to develop your own scheme of work. It is quite a job. No one has all the right answers. Everyone will make some mistakes, BUT MISTAKES ARE GOOD. THAT'S HOW WE ALL LEARN. Do the best you can, and you will learn, too.



Summary

In this unit, you learned about a scheme of work and a unit plan. As the prerequisite to making these, you learned about planning. Planning is one of the keys to a successful instructional programme. It helps us to:

- select relevant goals and objectives,
- make decisions about the content and structure of the instructional programme,
- ensure that necessary resources are obtained, and
- evaluate the effectiveness of the programme.

Because of the challenges associated with developing an effective multigrade program, teaching is particularly dependent on dedication, time, research and resources.

We learned that a scheme of work helps plan the school year. It ensures that we will not miss any important topics. It also helps us to arrange items in a learning sequence that is appropriate for our students. A scheme of work is not a fixed document. It changes and develops from time to time.

We sequenced learning activities or events by using our common sense, our own experiences and the characteristics of our students. We noted their needs, interests, behaviour and readiness. We reviewed the national curriculum and syllabuses. A syllabus includes concepts and objectives, competencies or outcomes. All of these helped us to decide what to teach and when to teach it. We spread difficult competencies out over two or three terms. Difficult competencies are also divided into smaller, easier ones.

After organising competencies, we developed a unit plan. This helped us develop our teaching ideas and activities. Lesson plans for each day were made based on our unit plans. Lesson plans will be discussed in more detail in the next unit.



Reflection

How can you use the information presented in this module to help you prepare a scheme of work?



Unit Test

1. What is a scheme of work?
2. Define a unit plan.
3. Compare thematic instruction with topical instruction.
4. What guidelines and/or resources can you use to help you sequence objectives, content and activities?



Suggested Answers

Self-Assessment 1

1. Planning is a key to a successful instructional programme because it helps us to:
 - select relevant goals and objectives,
 - make decisions about the content and structure of the instructional programme,
 - ensure that necessary resources are obtained, and
 - evaluate the effectiveness of the programme.
2. A scheme of work is a plan showing what to teach and when to teach it. It provides guidelines for us to follow and helps us to order topics in a sequence that is appropriate for our learners.

When preparing a scheme of work, the ideas about what to teach and when to teach it come from our own experience, from our learners and from the national curriculum and syllabuses.

Self-Assessment 2

1.
 - a. Common subject grouping is the organisational approach Brigid used in her scheme of work.
 - b. Mathematics is one of the subjects that requires a certain sequence in its presentation. Different grades may be studying the same topic, but it has to be presented at different levels of understanding.
 - c. The main components in Brigid's plan:
 - Topic – the subject of the lessons.
 - Content – defines the topic.
 - Objectives – state the specific behaviours that the learner must display.
 - Materials – list the necessary resources.
2. Subject grouping is the simultaneous learning of the same content by all class levels.

Practice Activity

The answers to the practice activity will vary. They are totally dependent on the topic you selected and your individual approach to the topic. It is important for you to discuss this activity with another educator. Any feedback that you receive may be invaluable.

Regardless of the topic you chose, however, your scheme of work should look more or less like the example in this unit.

Unit Test

1. A scheme of work is a plan that shows the teacher what to teach each week, month and term of the school year.
2. A unit plan is a series of lesson activities based on an idea or theme.
3. Thematic instruction is based on ideas around which we teach many subjects. Topical instruction is based on single topics for different subjects.
4. In order to sequence objectives, content and activities effectively, you must:
 - use common sense and experience,
 - consider the learners' needs, interests, behaviour and readiness, and
 - consult the national curriculum and syllabuses.

UNIT 6: Lesson Planning



Introduction

In Unit 5, the planning of a scheme of work was discussed. We saw how ideas are transferred from the curriculum to the syllabus and then to the scheme of work. Teachers use unit plans to guide their work. The unit plan is developed from the scheme of work and syllabus into smaller lesson plans. In this module, you will learn how you can develop the lesson plan from the unit plan.

Lesson plans are useful and necessary because they ensure that you are prepared each time you stand in front of the class. Imagine that you did not plan for the day's lessons and you get into the middle of the lesson and realise that you did not bring the learning or teaching materials that you need. Lesson plans help you to think in advance about the materials you need, the objectives of the lesson and how to present the lesson. Lesson plans are developed in advance so that you can conduct the lesson smoothly and successfully. To illustrate this, read the story below.

Patricia Plans a Meal

Patricia invited two of her friends to visit her on Saturday. She went to town to do some shopping. "Now what shall I make for my dear friends?" thought Patricia. "Oh, yes, I know Caroline likes sadza and Kully likes mutton."

Patricia walked into the supermarket and bought mealie-meal and mutton. She went home and prepared the meal along with fresh vegetables.

Soon the guests arrived and they sat down for dinner. They had a great time, and Kully even commented on Patricia's cooking.

After they had all eaten, Patricia asked whether they enjoyed themselves.

"The mutton was very tasty, and I had a wonderful time," said Kully.

"Can you give us the recipe on how to cook mutton?" requested Caroline.

Patricia had an enjoyable and successful social evening with her friends because she was aware of what her friends liked and she planned her meal accordingly. In a way, planning a meal is like planning a lesson. Careful lesson planning is very important and is the sign of good teaching.

In multigrade situations, separate lesson plans for the different class levels are not always practical because of the complexities of teaching more than one level at the same time. Therefore, in this situation, creative lesson planning is necessary. This unit provides guidelines and suggestions for writing a lesson plan.

Objectives

After completing this unit, you should be able to:

1. Explain the purpose of a lesson plan.
2. List the essential components of a lesson plan.
3. Design a lesson plan for your multigrade class.

Content

This unit will cover the following topics:

- the purpose of lesson plans
- the components of a lesson plan
- the designing of a lesson plan for a multigrade class.

The Purpose of a Lesson Plan

Preparing a lesson plan ahead of time gives you a sense of security and confidence in the teaching-learning process. If you are going to teach a class successfully, you must have a clear idea about the topic you will be teaching about and you must make the necessary preparations for the lesson. Good lesson planning helps you to:

- motivate the learners and ensure their attentiveness,
- ensure the lesson is appropriate for the abilities of the learners,
- define relevant objectives and relate them to previous topics and topics to be taught in the future,
- establish lesson content,
- estimate how much time you will need to spend on each lesson,
- obtain and prepare learning-teaching materials, and
- ensure that the classroom surroundings are conducive to learning.

Timetabling

Multigrade teaching is complicated because you must consider many things at the same time. A timetable will give your work structure. You use it as a guide and as a check to determine whether the work you planned is on track. An effective timetable should be easy, simple and straightforward to follow. If it is complicated, it will confuse you and you may not follow it.

A timetable can help you:

- plan the work for each grade,
- ensure that you teach all topics or subjects, and
- allocate an appropriate amount of time for each subject.

The timetable should indicate:

- the learning areas or topics to be taught,
- which grade(s) will be taught,
- the time an item is scheduled to be taught, and
- how long an item will be taught.

A timetable is an essential tool for effective teaching. Read Module 2 for more information about timetabling.

Preparations

Below are some hints regarding how you can allocate your time during a lesson:

- Plan sufficient time to accomplish your learning objectives. Too little time or too much time can make learners lose their interest and concentration.
- Recognise that all your class time is not used for teaching. Some of the time is spent on administrative tasks such as taking attendance.
- Plan independent learning activities for all topics to be taught.
- Ensure that you have enough time to help individuals or groups.
- Stick to your timetable as much as possible, but if it does not work, adjust it.

Read the story below.

Mr. Ralph's Teaching Experience

Mr Ralph, a recent graduate of a teacher's college, was about to teach his first class, a multigrade class of students in Grades 5 and 6.

He read the Teacher's Guide and saw that the first topic was 'Plants'. He felt that since he was fresh out of college and he had made enough plans, it was unnecessary for him to go through the process of planning a lesson.

In teaching the lesson, he stood before the class reading from a text. Most of the ideas were new to the learners, and Mr Ralph himself mispronounced many terms.

The class became restless. Some learners rested their heads on the desks. Charles, Justice and Trevor were busy making paper planes. While Mr Ralph's head was in the book, they sailed the planes across the classroom. Others in the class found this activity much more interesting than the lesson and soon they were making and sailing planes. Noise filled the classroom.

Mr Ralph was very angry with his learners. He stopped reading and ended the lesson abruptly.

Source: Adapted from Commonwealth Secretariat, Caribbean Community Secretariat and Commonwealth of Learning. (1998: 64-65). *Multigrade Teaching Programme. Module 9: Preparing the Scheme of Work and Lesson Plan.* London: Commonwealth Secretariat.



Self-Assessment 1

Answer the questions below.

1. Why did Mr. Ralph lose control of his class?
2. What could Mr Ralph have done to make his lesson more effective?
3. If you were Mr Ralph's headteacher, what advice would you have given him?

Possible answers to these questions are found at end of this unit.



Components of a Lesson Plan

Before you plan a lesson for a multigrade class, you should:

- study the integrated curriculum and syllabus, and
- decide the areas or topics the different grades can work together on.

A lesson plan is made up of these components:

- subject or topic
- grade level
- time required or allocation
- lesson objectives
- materials needed for the lesson
- content
- teaching methods and learning activities
- evaluation.

Each of the above components plays an important role in guiding the teaching-learning activities.

Lesson Plan Design

This section covers the following topics:

- subject or topic
- grade level
- time required
- objectives
- instructional materials
- content
- teaching methods and learning activities.

Subject or Topic

Begin by asking yourself two questions:

- Is the topic to be taught within the ability range of the learners?
- Do I have sufficient information about the topic?

If the topic is not within the ability range of the learners, you need to provide them with background information. Perhaps you could show them pictures or photographs, or tell them a story.

If you do not have sufficient information about the topic, you could conduct your own research or you could ask a colleague

for help. Always equip yourself with the knowledge and skills that you want your learners to master.

Grade Level

As you plan, you need to ask yourself:

- What is the ability level of students in the class?
- What type of motivational strategies can I use?
- What do learners already know about the topic?
- What aspect of the topic will be relevant or of interest to my students?
- What knowledge and skills do the students have that they could apply to this new topic?

By answering these questions, you will be able to plan a lesson that is appropriate for the learners. You will also be able to select activities that will interest them.

Time Required

The timing or duration of your lesson should be included in your lesson plan. You need to determine:

- how much time the lesson will require, and
- the time of the day, week and term when the lesson will be taught.

The information on how much time is needed will help you to determine how much you can cover in one lesson. A lesson scheduled at the end of the day should contain exciting activities because learners tend to become restless and inattentive then.

Objectives

Objectives are what you expect the learners to be able to do at the end of the lesson, and it is preferable that they be written in behavioural terms. For example, by the end of the lesson, learners should be able to read a passage or recite a poem. If objectives are written in this manner, they can be measured easily. Objectives should be ‘SMART’, that is, **S**pecific, **M**easurable, **A**chievable, **R**easonable and within a given **T**ime frame.

Lesson objectives will help you to select the content and the instructional or learning strategies.

Instructional Materials

If your lesson is to proceed smoothly, all necessary materials should be available. There should be sufficient textbooks and learning and teaching materials. The resources you choose can help you to focus on your objectives. Choose material that:

- is appropriate for the lesson and the grade and age level of your learners, and
- will help learners master the concepts and skills in your lesson.

By stating the resources you will need on the lesson plan, you will be able to acquire the resources you need prior to the lesson.

Content

You should know the content so that you can explain the subject matter. The information can be sequenced in several ways:

- In order of difficulty. Determine which concepts will be easy to learn and which are more difficult.
- In chronological or sequential order. This order is used when teaching subjects like social studies. Content is presented according to the date on which events took place.
- From whole to part. For example, in mathematics, you may teach one whole before focusing on halves and quarters.
- From part to whole. You may first talk about parts of a plane before discussing how all the parts enable it to get in the air and fly.
- From the known to the unknown. For example, in social studies, you teach about families before you teach about countries.

Teaching Methods and Learning Activities

When planning a lesson for a multigrade class, it is important to focus on the presentation of the lesson.

Lesson presentation can be divided into three stages:

- introduction,
- procedure or development, and
- conclusion.

Introduction. The introduction should arouse or catch the learners' attention and interest. The learner must be motivated and ready for the skills and concepts to be learned. In order to help you arouse their interest, consider what the learners already know about the subject.

Development. After introducing the lesson, you should present the body of the lesson in a way that will help the learners to understand. You should present the subject matter clearly and use manageable steps and simple language. Give learners the

opportunity to think for themselves. Do make use of good questioning techniques.

Conclusion. Try to end your lesson on a high note. Sum up the lesson in a way that will reinforce the skills and concepts taught.

Activities

Activities consist of all the actions undertaken by the learner in order to learn. Activities are conducted according to 'the 3 Ps'. These are presentation, practise and performance.

Presentation. Try to present new information in more than one way. Provide examples, samples or pictures of the new information.

Practice. Give learners an opportunity to put the new knowledge and skills into practice.

Performance. Learners should be given a chance to perform what they have learned. For example, they could solve a problem using the new knowledge or skills. Make sure that they understand the new information well enough to remember or apply it in a different setting.

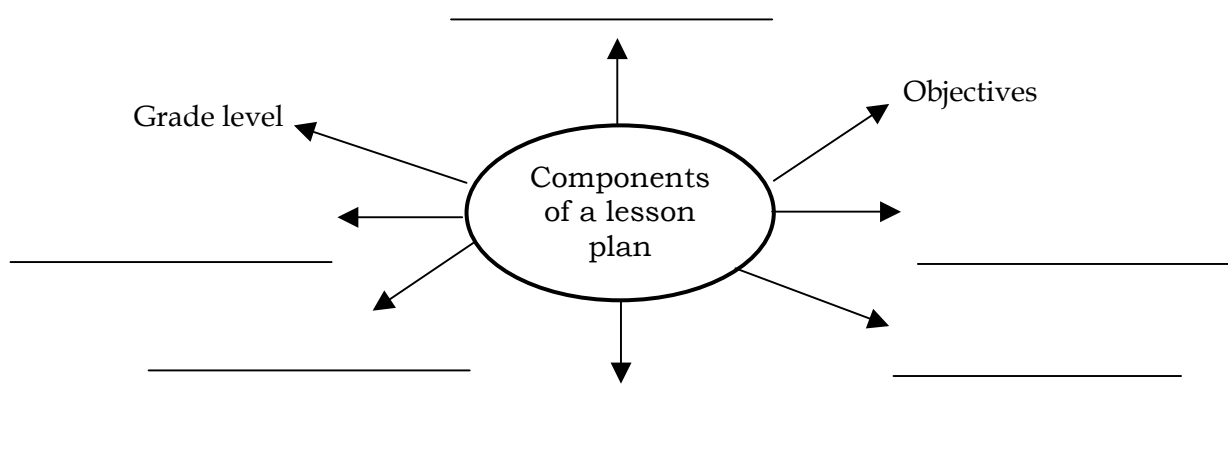
Evaluation

Evaluation is a means of judging progress or success. After you have taken learners through the steps of your lesson plan, you should determine if the objectives have been met. The learners' performance on the activities will give you an idea of the extent to which they have mastered the new concepts. If the learners are not able to achieve the objectives that have been set, review the lesson with them. You may need to use a different approach to the material.



Self-Assessment 2

1. Based on your experience and what we have stated about lesson planning, complete the diagram below. Indicate the missing components of a lesson plan.



2. Write a brief description of the items you have added to the diagram above.

Answers to this activity are provided at the end of this unit.



Practice Activity

1. Select a lesson topic and write three objectives that you can use in teaching your multigrade class.
2. List resources that you will need when you teach the topic you have chosen in question number 1.
3. Write an introduction to your lesson.
4. How will you know that your lesson is a success?

Answers to this practice activity are provided at the end of this unit.



Summary

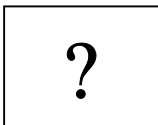
In this unit, we noted that lesson plans are useful because they ensure that you have thought about all the necessary components of the lesson. These components include the subject or topic, the grade level of the learners, the time required for each topic, lesson objectives, teaching and learning materials, the content, teaching methods and learning activities and evaluation strategies.

After you have worked through this unit, we hope that you will be better equipped to develop lesson plans and use them effectively in your multigrade class.



Reflection

Now that you have finished reading this unit, reflect on the importance of planning a lesson and the components of a lesson plan. Remember that a successful meal and social evening starts with a plan. A successful lesson also starts with a plan.



Unit Test

1. Plan a lesson for a week of activities for your multigrade class.
2. Below are three points of view about planning. Read the views below and comment on each of them.

Good teachers develop different lesson plans for different groups in their class. Different lesson plans are based on learner interest and ability. Sometimes we ask different groups to perform similar tasks, so that they can learn from one another. For example, group 1 describes the life cycle of a moth while group 2 describes its reproductive system.



Some teachers suggest preparing one lesson plan for an entire week. It is not always necessary to have a different lesson plan for each day. Many lessons take more than one day to complete.



Not all teachers use lesson plans. Most teachers use them when they begin teaching. When they have gained experience, they throw them away and use notebooks. Experienced teachers keep a notebook about their lessons.





Suggested Answers

Self-Assessment 1

1. Mr Ralph lost control of his class because:
 - He did not involve learners in the learning exercise.
 - He did not make the lesson interesting.
 - He read from a book throughout the lesson.
 - He did not pay attention to his students while reading. Therefore, he did not observe the students' behaviour before they became unruly.
 - He did not practise pronouncing terms in the book before the lesson.
 - He did not plan and carefully note what he was going to do.
2. Mr Ralph could have done some or all of the following to make his lesson more effective:
 - Prepare a lesson plan.
 - Begin by asking learners what they knew about plants and then introducing ideas that the students did not know.
 - Bring sample plants to class or ask students to bring in plants.
 - Present a small lecture, and then allow the class to discuss the topic.
 - Involve learners in activities.
 - Pay more attention to the behaviour of his students.
3. You could advise Mr Ralph to plan before teaching and to employ many of the suggestions included in the answers for question number 2.

Self-Assessment 2

1. The diagram should have the components listed below.
 - subject or topic
 - grade level
 - time required or allocation
 - lesson objectives
 - materials needed for the lesson
 - content
 - teaching methods and learning activities
 - evaluation

2. A brief description of each component is provided below.
 - **Subject.** You need to know if the topic to be taught is within the ability range of the pupils.
 - **Grade level.** You need to know what learners already know and their ability levels.
 - **Time required.** Include in your lesson plan the duration of your lesson and when it will all be taught.
 - **Objectives.** Lesson objectives help you to select the content and strategies. Objectives indicate what you expect the learners will be able to do at the end of the lesson.
 - **Materials.** The materials may be both instructional and learning materials. Select materials that are appropriate for the subject matter and the ability levels of the students.
 - **Content.** This is the information required to describe, support and/or explain a topic.
 - **Teaching methods and learning activities.** List the methods that you will use to help the students learn. You can divide your lesson presentation into an introduction, a development component and a conclusion.
 - **Evaluation.** Evaluation is a means of judging progress or success in a given situation. An evaluation should be conducted after every lesson so that you know whether the learners achieved the lesson objectives and whether you need to review parts of the lesson.

Practice Activity

1. Remember, objectives should be 'SMART'. That is, **S**pecific, **M**easurable, **A**chievable, **R**easonable and within a given **T**ime frame.
2. Carefully select resources that will help you to achieve your objectives. Select resources that are accessible to you. Your students and the community may be able to provide some of the resources.
3. The introduction of the lesson should reflect what the learners already know. It should also arouse the interest of the learners.
4. The learners' performance during and at the end of the lesson will give you an indication of the success of your lesson plan. Ask learners to perform an activity that will clearly indicate whether or not they can apply the information and concepts you have taught them.

Unit Test

1. When planning activities, bear in mind the 3P's: presentation, practice and performance.
 - Examples of presentations include giving a verbal explanation, making use of visual aids, giving a demonstration and writing on the chalkboard.
 - Examples of practice include having students work in pairs or groups with one another, repeating words and collecting objects.
 - Examples of performance include drawing, writing, giving an oral report, reciting, singing, playing a game, applying the new skill in different situations and solving problems using the new skills.
2. There is no correct answer for this question. However, remember that we make lesson plans because they help us to ensure that we have thought about all the necessary parts of the lesson we are going to deliver. They give us confidence because we will be prepared to teach the lesson. It is a good idea to make different lesson plans, each designed to meet the needs of different learners.

UNIT 7: Lesson Presentation Skills



Introduction

In Unit 6, you considered how a lesson is planned. The focus was not so much on the steps you should follow when developing a lesson plan, but on how you can use your skills to develop an integrated multigrade lesson plan. This unit stresses the need to employ good presentation skills in a multigrade teaching situation.

Objectives

After completing this unit, you should be able to:

1. Define lesson presentation skills.
2. Describe good lesson presentation skills.
3. Discuss seven ways to present a lesson effectively.

Content

This unit will cover the following topics:

- a definition of presentation skills
- advice regarding presentation skills
- lesson presentation.

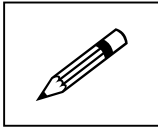
Advice to a Beginning Teacher

Knowing that many teachers find primary school multigrade teaching a major challenge, one inspector had the following advice:

Start with the topics that you know well and in which you are confident. If poetry is your strength, then include it. If attribute blocks and set theory are something you love, then teach them.

Be careful not to be too unbalanced; but starting with your own strength will help you develop techniques for handling the wide range of pupils. Once you have made this start, you will be in a better position to teach the rest of the curriculum.

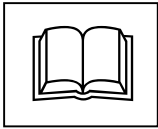
Source: Bray, M. (1987: 41). *Are Small Schools the Answer? Cost Effective Strategies for Rural Small Provision*. Hong Kong: University of Hong Kong and Commonwealth Secretariat.



Self-Assessment 1

Do you agree that starting with what you know can help you build the necessary confidence in your presentation of a lesson?

A suggested answer to this activity is provided at the end of this unit.



The Importance of Lesson Presentation Skills

Lesson presentation skills are a key element in the success of a lesson. Unless you have good presentation skills, your well-planned lesson can fail.

Lesson presentation skills are techniques developed to ensure that teachers are able to present their lessons in the most interesting, thought provoking, logically sequenced and objective manner.

The key to a successful lesson presentation lies in two very important concepts:

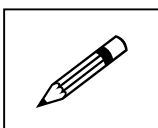
- clarity, and
- motivation.

For learners to enjoy your lesson, it has to be presented in clear, understandable language. When learners can understand a lesson, they feel capable, intelligent and successful. They will be motivated to continue learning.

Some of the subjects that you present on a daily basis are not very exciting. However, you should still try to capture the interest of your learners. Ensure that your lesson plan provides opportunities for interaction and participation.

The following points are important for you to remember as a multigrade teacher:

- Plan your lessons very carefully.
- Ensure that you have enough teaching aids, self-instructional materials and clear grouping strategies.
- Use stories as a very effective lesson presentation technique. Stories can have hidden messages that keep the learners interested in a topic.



Self-Assessment 2

Why are clarity and motivation the most important aspects of lesson presentation?

The answer to the above question is provided at the end of this unit.



Guidelines for Presenting a Lesson

Teaching in a multigrade situation demands extra preparation and organisational skills, because the teacher is faced with a wide range of learners' ages, abilities and interests.

The *Teacher Basic Competencies Manual* (Republic of Namibia, 1996) identifies guidelines for presenting a lesson. The following suggestions are based on this manual.

1. **Be prepared.** Don't come to teach a lesson unprepared.

What do you think will happen if the teacher comes to teach a class unprepared?

In a multigrade classroom, this can result in chaos. If you are unprepared, you will not be able to meet the learners' individual needs, interests and abilities. Nor will you be able to monitor their progress. The advantage of planning in advance is that you would have thought through the lesson carefully and completed the necessary research about content. Then you would plan accordingly. An essential factor for successful multigrade teaching is the teacher's ability to plan and prepare the lesson. Always plan carefully.

2. **Clearly state your message.** Don't ramble by talking constantly and aimlessly.

When you present your lesson, clearly state what you want to say. When you ramble, you confuse the learners, and they will lose interest. You want your learners to be actively involved in your lesson. Therefore, limit your talking time, give clear instructions and provide opportunities for students to become active participants.

3. **Plan your lesson.** Do not make up the lesson as you go.

If you do make up the lesson as you go, it is likely that you will forget a piece of information, not have the materials available that you need or forget to involve the students. You must plan to ensure that your lesson is interesting and caters to the needs of the learners.

4. **Know your material.** Don't read from the text with your nose in the book.

Prior to your lesson, read your material carefully and be prepared to explain what the text means during class time. Gone are the days when the teacher considered learners as empty vessels to be filled. Now the learners have to discover things for themselves and the role of the teacher is to direct and facilitate learning.

5. Use teaching materials.

The teaching materials are there for you to use and to allow learners to utilise them to assist their learning. For example, if there is a computer in the school, don't talk about what it can do. Use it to show what it can do and show learners how to use it so that they can learn.

6. Help students with their writing. Don't say, "Open your books and start writing."

Writing is a difficult skill. Students need guidance to write well. They need to listen, speak or read about what they are going to write. Give students a basis for writing. Discuss the writing assignment before you ask students to write.

7. Set an example. Don't shout, scream or cry.

You should set an example for your students. You should model caring behaviour. Be gentle, smile and laugh with your learners. Learners should feel free to ask the teacher questions. Learners should feel comfortable in the classroom.

Remember! Whatever you do in front of these learners, it should be exemplary.

8. Speak clearly. Don't speak very rapidly.

In a multigrade classroom, learners are in the same class, but they have different abilities. If you speak too quickly, some learners will not understand you. Take note of how you speak to your learners and how they react to your use of voice.

9. Help students answer questions. Don't ask, "Maria, what is the answer?"

The purpose of teaching is not to ask learners to supply answers to an endless series of questions. But if you do ask questions, you need to prompt learners by rephrasing the question, providing hints, referring to other knowledge and simplifying the content or structure of the question.

There are two questioning techniques you can use to improve the learners' participation. One is **redirecting**, a technique in which the teacher asks several learners the question without restating or clarifying the question. The other is the **affective** technique, which allows learners to state their attitudes, opinions and preferences. By using affective techniques, you are sending a message to your learners that you value them and accept them.

- 10. Direct questions to individuals and small groups.** Don't ask the whole class to answer in chorus.

Most teachers prefer whole class instruction. Why do you think this is so? Whole class instruction gives teachers more control over their classrooms. Whole class instruction works well for the presentation of information and less well when information is to be manipulated. Chorus answering is not a sign of learning because it only tests for knowledge and not for comprehension or other higher thinking skills. With a group of 60 to 80 learners, it will not be effective. Even with a small group of learners, if you ask learners to answer in chorus, you are assuming that all learners learn in the same way and have the same understanding. However, chorus activity has its place in teaching and learning. It can be used effectively in music or teaching pronunciation.

- 11. Don't say, "Children must be seen and not heard."**

What does the above statement mean to you?

Children must be seen and heard in a multigrade classroom. Every learner is important and must be reached because what we are trying to do is to develop citizens who are active and able to participate and contribute to the total development of their nation.

- 12. Help all your learners.** Don't ignore a child who seems confused.

Frequently, learners who look confused and lost in large classes are ignored. A good teacher would try to find out why the child looks confused and try to help the child. In Unit 4 on teacher support, we advised you to seek help from the community and other learners. They may support you in helping students who may not understand the material being taught.

- 13. Arrive on time.** Don't come late from the staff room.

Begin and finish your lesson on time. If your learners see you using your time effectively, they will do the same. Remember you should be exemplary.

- 14. Be consistent.** Do not act one way, and then act another way.

It is human nature to have good and bad days. But as a teacher, you should not be ruled by your emotions. Every day, you must maintain the same standard and level of order. Establish routines and assign responsibilities. In a classroom where there are no established routines or rules, learners may feel that they are free to do whatever they like.

Rules, on the other hand, make it clear what is the acceptable standard of behaviour. There is a need for the teachers to be consistent themselves. You should treat all learners the same. You should not give special privileges or treatment to certain learners just because you like them. You should not punish learners just because you do not like them.

15. Follow routines that you and your learners have set.

Don't violate them.

Try to establish classroom routines at the beginning of the year. If you allow your learners to participate in the establishment of these routines, they will be more willing to follow them. They will also have a sense of ownership. Establish routines for questioning, leaving the room and using resources.

Once these routines are established, they should not be changed without consultation with the learners.

16. Reward and praise your students. Don't use praise unless it is deserved.

Everyone has a need for emotional security. Children are by nature eager to please. Remember to give them praise when it is due. You can use different words to indicate your degree of appreciation. You can use words such as very good, smart and great. You should let learners know when they have done well and deserve praise and when you do not approve of their behaviour. We all like to be told that we are good at something, but it is also good to be told about our weaknesses in a nice way so that we can try to improve.

17. Help students to understand. Don't beat a child who doesn't understand.

If a child does not understand what is being taught, what should you do?

There are many reasons why learners behave the way they do, and we cannot ignore them. Some behaviours can be traced to the learner's own physical and emotional development, some to social factors and others to weakness in the teaching situation.

Find out why the learner behaves the way he or she does. Speak with him or her. Diagnose the causes of the problem. Remember that corporal punishment is not acceptable in many parts of the world. If the child is already experiencing difficulties, that child does not need to be punished. The child needs to be understood and assisted.

- 18. Let the students be active.** Don't dominate the lesson with teacher talk.

In a multigrade classroom, teacher talk should be at a minimum. Teaching should be learner-centred, meaning that you should give more time to the learners so that they can discuss ideas or topics and be actively involved in their learning. Give them time to ask questions, to discuss topics in groups, to build something, to write a report and to report back to you about their activities.

- 19. Address the needs of learners.** Don't neglect their needs.

What are some of your learners' needs and backgrounds?
What will happen if you neglect them?

In a multigrade classroom, learners have various needs. Some may need to gain confidence and learn how to interact effectively with others. Some may find reading or doing math difficult. A few may have health problems or come from one-parent families. Your class will comprise a mixture of individuals with different needs and backgrounds.

In order to meet the needs of all learners at their respective instructional level, a multigrade teacher relies heavily on scheduling cross-age tutoring or peer tutoring. For example, the learner who is acting as a librarian that week reads a daily story to younger children while the teacher works with the older learners and attends to their individual needs.

Learners also work together to complete tasks while the teacher meets learners individually. Since the teacher cannot be everywhere or with every learner at the same time, the teacher shares instructional responsibilities with other learners or parents within the context of clear rules and routines. Learners learn how to help one another and themselves. This independence is critically important because it enables the teacher to work with individual learners and attend to their individual needs.

- 20. Make your own decisions.** Do not let others tell you what to think.

It is wise to listen to the advice of others, but as a multigrade teacher, you know your learners best. It is professionally appropriate to make decisions about your instruction. Remember that whatever decisions you make affect you and your learners.

Seven Ways to Present a Lesson Effectively

There are several ways you can present your lesson so that it can be effective. The *Teacher Basic Competencies Manual*

(Republic of Namibia, 1996) identifies seven ways you can improve your lesson presentation skills.

- Get your learners' attention.
- Show enthusiasm.
- Provide clear explanations of the content and the instructions.
- Provide smooth transitions from one part of the lesson to the next.
- Present your lesson at a good pace, not too fast and not too slow.
- Use a variety of teaching methods.
- Provide a clear and interesting closure to the lesson.

Each of the items above will be explained in more detail below.

1. Get your learners' attention.

There are several ways you can gain the attention of your learners:

- Tell them a story.
- Announce what the lesson is going to be about and note the objectives. Objectives specify what you want learners to be able to do by the end of the lesson.
- Review a previous lesson.
- Check the learners' existing knowledge on the topic of the lesson. For example, if your topic is 'water', find out what they know about 'water', its uses and its different forms.
- Demonstrate something. For example, show them how to make a sandwich and ask them "What am I doing? Why am I doing it? What did I use?"
- Use materials. For example, you could bring a compass and ask the learners how the compass could be used.
- Use body language to start your lesson. Smile!

2. Show enthusiasm.

If you are enthusiastic, your students will respond in kind. They will be enthusiastic, too. They too want to enjoy themselves.

- You can show enthusiasm through the use of your voice. Use different tones and intonations to indicate excitement and feelings.
- Use your body language, facial expressions and gestures to show emotions such as fear and joy. Move around the class. You can show length and height with your hands

and arms. Encourage the learners and assure them that they are making progress throughout the lesson.

- Keep students awake by using warm-ups and telling jokes.

3. Provide clear explanations of the content and the instructions.

Ensure that words are chosen carefully, that they are spoken clearly and that they are simple and comprehensible.

Give clear instructions and explanations on what you want the learners to do. Do not write and speak at the same time. Allow learners to ask questions as soon as they realise that they do not understand something. Don't keep the question period at the end of each lesson. Ask the learners to tell you when your instructions must be repeated or clarified. Always emphasise key points and remember to use examples and summarise the main points.

4. Provide transitions.

Help your learners understand where they are in the lesson. You can say, "Now we are doing reading," or "We are now moving into writing."

Give clear directions and ensure that the learners know what you expect them to do. For example, tell them what materials they will need and where to get them.

5. Consider your timing.

You can keep your learners' attention by presenting your lesson at a good pace – not too quickly and not too slowly. You can pause to indicate that you have reached the end of an important point in your lesson. When you are about to begin a new concept, you can use silence to gain the learners' attention. Use your voice to signal important points. Give sufficient and efficient instruction. Provide help. Allocate time for each stage in your lesson plan and remember to be flexible. You are not teaching time, you are teaching learners. There is no point in finishing the lesson if learners are left with a lot of queries and confusion.

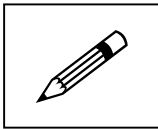
6. Use various teaching methods.

A multigrade teacher must know and use many teaching and learning methods. You should use methods that appeal to the five senses: sight, touch, hearing, smell and taste. The methods should be appropriate for the learners' needs, interests and abilities. Ensure that the learners have a great number of opportunities to participate and to learn something new.

7. Provide closure.

The closure of a lesson accomplishes several things. Closure can highlight the lesson objectives, answer the important questions in a lesson and explain the meaning of the lesson. Techniques for providing effective closures are provided below:

- Tell the learners that the lesson is about to end and, if they are working on a task, they should prepare to finish it. Do not let the lesson end abruptly. Do a closing activity. For example, you could summarise the main points and ask learners what they have learned and how they can use the information they have learned.
- Praise the learners for their participation during the lesson.
- Use a closing ritual such as a song, prayer, a story or discussion circle.



Self-Assessment 3

List seven ways to present a lesson effectively.

The answer to this activity is provided at the end of this unit.



Practice Activity

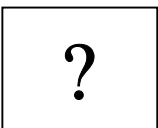
Reflect on the presentation advice provided in this unit. How could you improve your presentations? Use the seven ways of presenting an effective lesson the next time you present to a group or class.



Summary

In this unit, we discussed two important elements of lesson presentation skills. These are clarity and motivation. In addition, we reviewed 20 guidelines for delivering a lesson. We also discussed how you can improve your lesson presentation skills.

A good teacher is a good facilitator. He or she recognises the needs of the learners and makes every effort to address those needs by getting learners actively involved in learning.



Unit Test

1. What are the most important features of a good lesson presentation?
2. What seven things can we do as teachers to improve our lesson presentation skills?
3. How can a teacher provide clear explanations of the lesson content?
4. Why is the lesson closure important?



Suggested Answers

Self-Assessment 1

There is no correct answer for this question, as you will have your own opinion. However, most professional educators would agree that if you work on things you know well, you will build your confidence.

Self-Assessment 2

The teacher must provide clear instructions and explanations. Content must be presented in a clear and organised manner. If this is not done, learners may misunderstand the entire lesson. The teacher also needs to motivate learners. He or she needs to generate interest and involve the learners so that they will enjoy learning.

Self-Assessment 3

How to present a lesson effectively:

- Begin the lesson by gaining the learners' attention.
- Show enthusiasm throughout the lesson.
- Provide clear explanations of the content and the instructions.
- Provide smooth transitions from one part of the lesson to the next.
- Present a lesson at a good pace, not too fast and not too slowly.
- Use a variety of presentation skills and materials.
- Provide a clear and interesting closure of the lesson.

Practice Activity

The answers to this activity will depend on your lesson presentation skills. However, you could prepare a checklist of all the things you plan to do in the lesson, then check whether you actually did them.

Unit Test

1. Clarity and motivation are the most important features of a good lesson presentation.
2. The following activities will improve presentation skills.
 - Gain attention.
 - Show enthusiasm.
 - Provide clear instructions and explanations.
 - Provide smooth transitions.

- Present a lesson at a good pace.
 - Use a variety of teaching methods and activities.
 - Provide a clear and interesting closure.
3. Teachers can provide clear explanations of lesson content by ensuring that words are chosen carefully, that they are spoken carefully and that they are understood.
 4. Lesson closure is important because it:
 - highlights the lesson objectives,
 - answers important questions of the lesson, and
 - explains the meaning of the lesson.

Module Test

1. What is multigrade teaching?
2. Compare multigrade and monograde teaching.
3. You are a trained teacher at Venda Village. The community wants to open a school, but it needs to consult the Ministry of Education. You have been asked to write to the Ministry explaining why there should be a school in the village. Outline the proposal you would send to the Ministry and state some of the benefits of multigrade teaching.
4. Discuss the challenges you would face when teaching a multigrade class. How you would overcome them?
5. Define and discuss what a scheme of work is and why it is needed in a multigrade teaching situation. List three organisational approaches you can use to make a scheme of work for a multigrade class.
6. Write a paragraph on the importance of planning for instruction in a multigrade class.
7. Discuss the critical considerations required for effective resource management.
8. Describe at least three types of support multigrade teachers need if they are to teach to the best of their ability.
9. A colleague visits you at your multigrade school and requests that you help him with lesson planning for a multigrade class. What are the main points you would emphasise and what are the steps you would advise him to follow if he wanted to produce an effective lesson plan?
10. Why is it important for teachers to have good lesson presentation skills?

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